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**GOVERNING MOTHER-CHILD COMMUNICATION  
ABOUT SEX IN HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC:  
POSITIONING LOVELINES**

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**Thesis Presented for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
In the Department of Psychology  
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## ABSTRACT

*Lovelines* was a didactic textual series that appeared in *Fairlady*, a South African women's magazine, instructing mothers on how sex should be talked about with young people to inoculate them against the risk of HIV/Aids. My reading of this media discourse, and mothers' appropriation of it, sought to examine how the primary target audience of middle classed mothers were persuaded to adopt particular communicative positions. Foucault's normative apparatus of family-sexuality-risk concerns the distribution of expertise - epidemiological science of risk in populations, developmental psychology-inscribed micro-practices of childrearing in families - and self-responsibilization of disciplinary power. This finds mothers governmentally positioned as relay points between 'public' (health, economy) and 'private' (family, childrearing, sex) apparatuses, tasked with appropriately socializing a new generation of sexually responsible citizens. This governmental rationality of neo-liberalism is read against South African conditions of mass media persuasion, HIV/Aids risk and talking about sex in families.

Several discourse analytical praxes of subject positioning - modeled on Foucault's approach to subjectivity - are established; and the study contrasts two praxes with different statuses of discourse relating to the *Lovelines* texts. Firstly, the texts themselves are read as 'addressors', hailing a particular audience into preferred positions (cf. Parker). Two readings are counterpoised - the discursive-structural or ideological positioning of 'experts', 'mothers' and 'adolescent girls', where the multivalent optics of surveillance between these positions hold them fast (Chapter 6); and the advocated psychological techniques of inter-subjective, mother-daughter communication about sex as micro-practices where powers and resistances run around (Chapter 7). A feature of these analyses was how multiple positions are offered to expose consequences of wrong action, and push positioning in preferred directions.

Secondly, interactive discourse was read from groups of parents who discussed *Lovelines* and their own sex-communication practices with their children (Chapter 8). This examined how parents positioned themselves in relation to the offered expertise in *Lovelines* (cf. Fairclough); and positioned one another during the discussions (cf. Wetherell). Analysis circled around the partial 'buy-in' to western psychological expertise in *Lovelines* on talking with children about sex 'openly' and 'frequently'; and appropriation fitted contextual contingencies. However, professional black/African mothers adopted these styles of talking as marks of modernization and class mobility.

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'It was as if it had suddenly discovered the dreadful secret of what had always been hinted at and inculcated in it: the family, the keystone of alliance, was the germ of all misfortunes about sex. And lo and behold, from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, the family engaged in searching out the slightest traces of sexuality in its midst, wrenching from itself the most difficult confessions, soliciting an audience with anyone who might know something on the matter, and opening itself unreservedly to endless examination. The family was the crystal in the deployment of sexuality; it seemed to be the source of a sexuality which it actually only refracted and diffracted. By virtue of its permeability, and through that process of reflections to the outside, it became one of the most valuable tactical components of the deployment of sexuality' (Foucault, 1978, p. 111).

'Sex is boring. I am much more interested in the problems about the technology of the self' (Foucault interview, cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 229).

'Something is always saying to me: Be plain. Be clear. But then something else interferes and unjoints my good intentions' (Carol Shields, 2005, p. 1).



# CHAPTER 1

## READING MEDIA DISCOURSE

### 1. POSITIONING LOVELINES IN (HEALTH) MEDIA DISCOURSE

This is a thesis about... media discourse as social and subjective practice of government. It implicates Foucault-inflected readings of a particular set of didactic health-promotion media texts on parental communication with young people about sex; and readings of talk by 'consumers' (targeted parents) about this set of texts. My discourse analytical readings unpack the ways that texts address an audience of readers, and the ways that readers are directed towards particular subject positions in relation to texts, expert discourses of childrearing and safety from HIV/Aids, and their own (lived) communicative practice in families. My readings are anchored to particular South African socio-cultural and discursive practices through examination of the *Lovelines* series in *Fairlady*, a nationally distributed women's magazine.

*Lovelines* was an inter-textual series on parenting responsibilities in a climate of HIV-risk; and was fabricated in a purposive institutional interstice between *Fairlady* and *loveLife*, a sexual health education media organization. Given the primary targeted audiences and aims of these media institutions/products, my readings are concerned with the government of (middle) classed maternal subjects, and the micro-practices of their conversations about sex with the young people ('adolescents') in their custody. This unpicks how modern government – in Foucault's (1977) critique of neo-liberalism's disciplinary powers – works through the routine management of the minutiae of our lives, from a distance, through reliance on 'facts' of scientific research and 'know-how' of expertise (Rose, 1990, 1992).

Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) have argued that mothers are positioned as relay points between 'public' (political, economic, social) and 'private' (family, emotions, sex) apparatuses; where their regulated 'democratic childrearing' labour is promised - by developmental psychology - to fabricate fully realized, autonomous, responsible young

citizens. This thesis extends Walkerdine and Lucey's examination into an age of advanced HIV/Aids epidemic; and considers how certain childrearing practices have not only become coupled to (gender, class, and) 'risk-safety', but are seen as 'progressive' (p. 8).

This chapter begins by 'positioning' *Lovelines* within a politics of governmental health promotion through media discourse in an age of HIV/Aids epidemic in South Africa; before demarcating theoretical and methodological parameters and praxes of this study. The latter half of the chapter is concerned with ways of reading didactic media discourse, and the assumptions about knowledge, power and action/practice so inscribed; and constituting a 'Foucauldian' spine, and gaze, for the examination of government to follow. The *Lovelines* texts appear in their original published serial form as Appendix 1.

### Constituting social responsibilities for HIV/Aids

In April 2000, *Fairlady* put in place a social responsibility strategy focusing on HIV/Aids, called '*Breaking the silence – HIV/Aids Fairlady 2000*'. The positioning in glossy women's magazines of socio-political issues – such as those infected/affected by HIV/Aids – is uneasy, given their branded marketing of (upbeat) domesticated 'advice', pleasure and leisure as competitive media products (Wilbraham, 1999a). *Fairlady's* estimated fortnightly readership of 725 000 was at this time constituted as 74% female (approximately 35 years old), 52% white, 40% employed part-time, 63% mothers, and 90% urban-dwelling, as a primary target audience; and further read by a wide range of age-groups in families, as a secondary audience (*All Media Products Survey*: AMPS, 2000).<sup>1</sup> The social responsibility project forged an alliance with *loveLife*, a high-profile sexual health promotion organization with extensive multi-mediated campaigns targeting both youth and parents.<sup>2</sup> The parameters of this 'media deal' between *Fairlady* and *loveLife* – to raise awareness of HIV/Aids in an audience of middle classed mothers – were demarcated as follows:<sup>3</sup>

1. A fortnightly 500-word column, *Lovelines*, to run for 26 weeks from April 2000 – March 2001: *Fairlady* donated editorial space, *loveLife* developed textual materials, on which *Fairlady* had final sign off;

2. A *loveLife* brand partnership with *Fairlady* in their annual events, such as the South African Fashion Awards, and fund-raising initiatives for HIV/Aids-projects; and
3. A commitment from *Fairlady* to include a constructive feature article on HIV/Aids in South Africa, in every 2<sup>nd</sup> issue.

Alice Bell's editorial (*From the editor, Fairlady*, 12 April 2000, p. 9) introduces the 'Breaking the silence' project and the partnership with *loveLife*, and it is reproduced here in its original published form as Text 1 (overleaf). I use this text to briefly explore the socio-political positioning of this *Fairlady* project related to several representations and lacunae, which constitute the territory to be traversed in this thesis. This exposition of socio-cultural and discourse practices that 'manufacture' (or encode) media texts – with particular subjects in mind – will be contextualized in terms of Fairclough's (1992) model of critical discourse analysis later on in the chapter.

A first point relates to how the HIV/Aids epidemic is made to appear in Text 1. The 'Breaking the silence' project is articulated as an innovative and status quo breaking initiative on several levels that are framed as relevant to *Fairlady*'s womanly readers. A first level refers to a rupture in representations of HIV/Aids in *Fairlady* itself. Of course, *Fairlady* has not been 'silent' in its coverage of HIV/Aids: the first of many articles appeared in May 1987 (viz. skeletal gay men in America), with a flow of uneasily shifting representations since. Furthermore, discursive injunctions to talk with children about sex – responsive to historicized procession of perceived social/sexual risks – have a 40-year genealogy in the magazine (see Chapter 5). However, 'Breaking the silence' appears to reflect a shift in positioning of the HIV/Aids epidemic and subject positions offered to its readers with regard to risk, active involvement in prevention, treatment-support and anti-discrimination. Text 1 figures local celebrities whose public positions on HIV/Aids have elevated them to role model status, for example: then-High Commissioner at South Africa House in London, Cheryl Carolus, speaks out against discriminatory housing loan practices that disqualify HIV+ people from benefits.

# from the editor

by Alice Bell abell@naspers.com

**T**his issue is the first of our new year – not the calendar one but our fiscal year, which runs from April until March. In the run-up to April 1, while planning our budgets and forecasts, we had a growing sense that we should somehow be doing more to get involved in the key issues that face all of us in this country.

So for the first year in FAIRLADY's history, we've put in place a social responsibility strategy that embraces all our major events, such as the South African Fashion Awards, and will actively raise funds for and awareness of one single issue.

For us, there was only one choice. The biggest threat to the prosperous future of this country is HIV/Aids, and barely a week goes by without new, horrifying statistics being released. For example, the HIV infection rate in teenage girls increased from 12,7 percent in 1997 to 21 percent in 1999. Add to this a government that's committed itself fully to addressing the HIV/Aids nightmare yet six years into the new democracy still doesn't seem to have a cohesive policy in place, a public who for the most part are still adopting an 'it won't happen to me' approach, and a press that rates murder, rape and robbery as more headline-grabbing than HIV, and no wonder we've concocted a recipe for disaster.

Recent comments by President Thabo Mbeki suggesting that the link between HIV and Aids be 're-examined' add to the sense of confusion, if not downright denial, in certain quarters. Commenting in the *Mail & Guardian* on the president's remark, Prof Malegapuru Makgoba, head of the Medical Research Council, warned that our country's becoming 'fertile ground for pseudo-science'. Although he welcomed the establishment of a committee to examine the way forward for HIV/Aids management, he said it would be 'annoying' if, instead, politicians merely focused on re-visiting issues science had already cleared up. (See our profile of Professor Makgoba in the August 4, 1999 issue of FAIRLADY.)

Apart from establishing committees and providing funding, there's a better way for members of our government to give us

**Sour:** The Department of Health for failing to spend R40 million, or 40 percent, of its annual budget to fight HIV/Aids. While the bureaucrats can't decide what to spend their money on, thousands of adults and babies with Aids are dying because their families can't afford the treatment. Not even when desperate NGOs clamoured for funds to fight the spread of the disease and Johannesburg Hospital closed its Aids clinic due to a lack of money did it occur to the department to release the funds.

**Sweet:** Prof Malegapuru Makgoba for lashing out at President Thabo Mbeki for suggesting that the link between HIV and Aids be 're-examined'. Mbeki uttered this piece of wisdom after consulting US-based dissident Aids scientists who believe Aids is caused not by HIV but by drug use and other risky acts.



a lead in the HIV/Aids issue: by having themselves tested and publicly declaring the results. It's widely rumoured that, when applying for insurance or housing loans that stipulate HIV testing, some senior government officials simply ignore the testing part. A notable exception is our High Commissioner in London, Cheryl Carolus, who had herself tested and openly talks about it.

**A**s a first step in our 2000/2001 FAIRLADY HIV/Aids Awareness strategy, we've joined loveLife in a fortnightly focus on adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviour.

The loveLife initiative is the biggest project of its kind ever launched in SA. Carefully thought out and developed, it's targeted primarily at young South Africans and at parents whose children are approaching adolescence. Gone are the days when we could avoid discussing sex and sexuality until our kids were well into their teens – hoping that by that time the biology teacher would have done the job for us. Marion Scher's article 'Is your child sexually active?' on page 34 will soon put an end to whatever illusions of adolescent innocence you may still have. It's an eye-opening and thought-provoking read, but, more importantly, it drives home the need for all of us to talk about sex more openly.

Organised under the auspices of Zanele Mbeki and a host of other leading South Africans, loveLife breaks the mould of traditional HIV campaigns by harnessing popular culture and the techniques of commercial advertising to promote a new lifestyle for young South Africans. The key to encouraging sexual responsibility is creating greater openness in communication about sex, sexuality and gender relations. On page 38 you'll find the first column in our new series on sex and sexuality, aptly called 'love-lines'. Throughout the year, we'll run the column in every issue. Also every fortnight, we'll feature our new Sweet and Sour Awards – given to those who have, in the preceding two weeks, deserved a bouquet or a brickbat. If you'd like to nominate anyone or any group for either award, let us know.

And please join FAIRLADY and loveLife in promoting awareness of HIV – not just what it is but also how to keep ourselves and our children safe yet still able to enjoy every person's birthright: a pleasurable, safe and emotionally fulfilling love life.

All suggestions, comments and bright ideas welcome – we'd love to hear from you.

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PHOTOGRAPHS: ADRIAAN OOSTHUIZEN, DALE YUDELMAN

A second level of representations engages the social silences that function as external conditions of possibility for epidemic in South Africa, and against which mothers are hailed to speak out. These conditions include a lack of *Governmental* (as in centralized State, not Foucauldian) commitment to a cohesive health policy on Aids prevention and treatment; a *public* who believes they are invulnerable to risk; and (middle classed) *media* obsessed with sensationalizing crime. Such statements serve to align *Fairlady* with pro-active forces of HIV/Aids prevention and positive lifestyles captured in the *loveLife* brand, which is represented in Text 1 in evangelical terms as '[breaking] the mould of traditional HIV campaigns'.

But representations of HIV/Aids are hard to break or dislodge; and so, epidemiological discourses about risk are rehearsed in Text 1, as emotive and scientific scare tactics to effect persuasion. The HIV/Aids epidemic appears then as dangerous and out of control: a '*threat* to [our] prosperous future', a '*nightmare*', a '*disaster*' accompanied by '*horrifying statistics*' (my emphases). Text 1 claims that the fortnightly *Lovelines* series 'focuses on adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviour' – obviously for the benefit of ignorant/panicky mothers, who are hailed to re-socialize young people – and the 'epidemic of adolescence' idea supported by further scare tactics. These will become familiar territories and tactics in the chapters that follow.

For example, decontextualized (State Department of Health) antenatal statistics on unbridled HIV-infection rates in *teenage girls* – as a high-risk group – are uncritically recycled (see Chapter 4). In addition, an editorial preview of a feature article – 'Is your child sexually active?' – constitutes the risks of *pre-pubescent sex* amongst largely unsupervised (by mothers) youthful leisure activities in South Africa, e.g. after school, mall-trawling, parties, visiting friends, etc. Text 1 claims the above horrors as evidence that 'drives *home* the need for all of us to talk about sex more openly' (my emphasis). This constitutes the scientific stick that lashes docile maternal/womanly subjects – as 'all of us' – into talking positions with children *and* with men as sex-partners within family cells.

The realities of these horrors – as ‘Others’ - are counterpoised in Text 1 against the continued warding off of risk from an assumed-to-be ‘safe’ (HIV-free, middle classed) *Fairlady* audience of ‘fair ladies’. In the concluding sentence, the aim is inscribed as ‘to keep ourselves and our children safe’; and through participation in the *Fairlady-loveLife* campaign, to secure claims to individual ‘birthrights’, as responsible citizens, to ‘fulfilling love lives’ (rather than *sex* lives), as appropriate women (cf. Hollway, 1984a).

### Political positioning comes undone

A second point relates to vagaries of political positioning, and its deployment through *form* in Text 1. I briefly mention three aspects of this: (a) the *Sweet and Sour Awards*, (b) the precipitous severance of the media deal between *Fairlady* and *loveLife*, and (c) the absence of the red Aids ribbon icon on the editorial page. The editor announces in Text 1 a new fortnightly feature, *Sweet and Sour Awards*, as awards made to public figures deserving of ‘a bouquet or a brickbat’ in the field of HIV/Aids. The *Sweet and Sour Awards* are foregrounded on the editorial page (Text 1), formally situated within a text-box, with red headlines and a grinning image of Professor Malegapuru Makgoba, one of the recipients. Makgoba, then-Director of the Medical Research Council of South Africa, is lionized with a *Sweet Award* for his ‘rational medical science’ opposition to (the State’s apparent) Aids-denialism; and the State Department of Health is given a *Sour Award* for failing to spend its budget to fight HIV/Aids. This sweet-sour form of critical editorial positioning is continued in the next three issues of *Fairlady*; but is unseated from the editorial page and re-territorialized as a post-script to the *Lovelines* texts, deeper within the magazine (see *Lovelines* texts of 26 April, 10 May & 24 May: Appendix 1).

This sweet-sour forum of governmental surveillance – of redirecting the critical gaze onto the panoptic watchtower of expertise – works in several ways to establish a critical stance towards the inadequacy of (South African) State policies and health systems regarding HIV/Aids. First, HIV/Aids is strongly medicalized, with doctors, scientists and professors ideally figured as experts, positing incontrovertible empirical and clinical evidence of the viral aetiology of Aids, rules of prevention and the importance timeous treatment regimes

(cf. Patton, 1990a, 1990b; Tulloch & Chapman, 1992; Watney, 1994). Second, an unprecedented political space is opened in a women's magazine, with the situation of HIV/Aids within a wider politics of public health/illness. This tactical manoeuvre impelling positioned participation in political commentary on the apparent failure of State protection against HIV/Aids powerfully draws in Foucauldian governmental discourses of individualization and ethical self-formation that powerfully inscribe personal responsibility for risk-safety. For example: *liberal discourses* resist State-interference in 'private' (familial, sexual, health) matters through tasking individuals with particular disciplinary work on conduct of conduct; *human rights* discourses that, according to South Africa's 1994-Constitution, stake out individual rights and resist discrimination; *cognitive discourses* that inscribe rationally-based informed choices of individuals, and so on.

After the 24 May 2000 *Lovelines* text (4<sup>th</sup> in 17-text series), the sweet-sour forum disappears. *Fairlady's* Assistant Editor, commented informally to me on this disappearance in terms of (a) difficulties in keeping awards 'topical' with up-to-date issues, given the 6-week lag between text-production and publication/distribution of magazines; and (b) its overt politicization which was perceived to alienate *Fairlady* readers, who were non-responsive in nominating sweet-sour candidates (personal communication). Such positioning of women's magazine readers as 'non-politicized' echoes (broadly Marxist) perspectives on the demise of media as a public sphere for rational debate on political issues, undermined by the competitive mediated commodification of entertainment and personalized information in consumer culture (cf. Fairclough, 1992; Habermas, 1989; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). A Foucauldian view finds the (non-politicized) female-gendered and middle-classed audience of *Fairlady* set up in ways that responsabilize and galvanize individual government of 'safety' from HIV/Aids.

Another political disappearance happened some months subsequent to Text 1. The 'media deal' between *Fairlady* and *loveLife* was severed in November 2000, and the (altruistic) *Lovelines* series simply stopped after 17 texts had been published of the contracted 26. No formal institutional (or editorial) traces marked its denouement or departure. My ethnographic sleuthing among text-producers produced contradictory accounts of 'political'

dissolutions, e.g. funding fall-outs, changing institutional circumstances, branding competition and conservative media-ownership conspiracy theories; as well as disgruntled judgements about poor quality of texts. These aspects will be pursued in forthcoming publications and not in this thesis. However, my brief content analytical 'assessment' of the formative impact of *Lovelines* on quantity/quality of *Fairlady's* representations on HIV/Aids and sex-communication issues – produced for *Fairlady's* audience/use – appears as Appendix 2.

Finally, the *absence* of a red ribbon Aids-icon to mark the launch of *Fairlady's* 'Breaking the silence' project (Text 1) was politically ambiguous.<sup>4</sup> Internationally, the red ribbon is a powerful symbol around which stigma-reduction, awareness, care, support and hope for those living with HIV/Aids has been mobilized. But recent writing on the competitive politics of HIV/Aids campaigning in South Africa puts a more sinister spin on its deployment. The active promotion of the red ribbon during 1999-2000 in South Africa was part of the (State) Department of Health's *Beyond Awareness Campaign* (W. Parker, 2003). This symbol was unequivocally rejected by *loveLife* on grounds of *loveLife*-research that apparently found people 'were turned off by the red Aids ribbon, equating that symbol with disease and death' (Harrison & Steinberg, cited in W. Parker, 2003, p. 11). *LoveLife* insists on their own branding – 'talk about it' – on all their mediated HIV/Aids messaging; and do *not* use the red ribbon. Thus none of the *Lovelines* texts in *Fairlady* bear the red ribbon Aids-icon; but instead, *loveLife* branding. Such struggle over symbols and representations of HIV/Aids (potentially) finds subjects situated in a persuasive rivalry of branded knowledges, in the interstices between texts, practices, positions and forces (rather than as meaning-generators).

## 2. PARAMETERS AND PRAXES OF THIS THESIS

### The work of didactic representations as governmental self-formation

Attention to mass media discourse seems to be premised on the notion that 'the media have significant effects'; but, of course, 'there is little agreement on the nature and extent of these



assumed effects' (McQuail, 1994, p. 327). This generates unease about media influence in general, e.g. the 'signifying power' to represent phenomena in particular ways (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 2). This unease then runs in many directions depending on one's concerns. For example, media theorists, politicians, psychologists, feminists, sexual health activists or parents may vary in their assessment of the extent of media influence – too much, too little – for different reasons. In the instance of didactic texts, where 'preferred meanings' are (seemingly) wittingly encoded for particular reading subjects, the unease circles around the potential for slippage of persuasion, and the imbrication of knowledge and power (Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001; Hall, 1997; Mills, 1997). This is particularly so in health education texts concerned with HIV/Aids risk-reduction.

It is to this Foucauldian imbrication that this thesis speaks; *not* in the sense of dis/proving 'media power' (binding subjects ideologically to certain meanings/actions) or dis/proving 'people power' (allowing subjects untrammelled interpretive freedom and agency); but in exploring how the rhetorical surfaces of persuasion, and subjection, work (a) in discourse practices between text and reader, and (b) always partially, negotiated in interactions with others. This thesis is aligned with views of the powers of media texts as not located in the 'message' (preferred meaning or subject positioning) itself, but as swirling in a matrix of forces in text-production, and negotiated appropriation of meanings in particular contexts of use (e.g. Fairclough, 1995a; Miller, Kitzing, Williams & Beharrell, 1998; Mills, 1994).

This is not a formal evaluation of the 'efficacy' of *Lovelines*, *Fairlady* or *loveLife* in producing preferred meanings, or targeted/sustained behaviour change. Through attention to media discursive practice, this thesis seeks to put Foucauldian ideas about discourse, power-knowledge and disciplined subjectivities to work in unpicking the deployment of sex along the parent-child axis in families. The focus on government of families cuts to the regulated pedagogization of children's and youth sexuality; and then to the normalizing surveillance of mothering produced through mediated childrearing information in women's magazines, such as *Fairlady*. The interpellative hailing of mothers is rendered more insistent (and plaintive) in an age of epidemic of sexual risk in South Africa. Talking with children about sex in a particular way – frankly, openly, pervasively, dialogically, positively – comes

coupled with (institutionalized) promises of subjective and societal beneficence, through (assumed) inoculation against risk of HIV/Aids (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998).

Nikolas Rose (1985, 1990, 1998) has defined the (westernized) *psy-complex* as an historicized assemblage of institutions – with the psy-prefix, psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy – which, as ‘intellectual technologies’, have fabricated a hegemonic currency of (normal, preferred) kinds of persons, conducts and relationships. This expertise is concerned with ‘the psyche of the individual’ as a science of normative differentiation, and as a *social* science that addressed problems of ‘maladjustment’ (Rose, 1989a, 1989b). Thus, the psy-complex inscribes the disciplining of sexualized self-growth as a pivotal feature in the development of stable, (re)productive citizenship; and self-esteem, self-efficacy and responsible sexual practice become cornerstones of risk-reduction ensuring healthy, and docile populations (Rose, 1990). I review such Foucauldian frameworks of family-regulation in Chapter 2; and the fraught debates and copious empirical/theoretical literatures, circling around the psy-complex, on micro-practices of parental communication with children about sex in Chapter 3.

Mediated health-imperatives of modern, western, neo-liberal democracies reproduce the surfaces on which knotty, indigestible and recalcitrant ‘real issues’ of diverse South African families are made to appear as forms of resistance to media power. Mass mediated mobilization of representations of ‘healthier’ or ‘safer’ alternatives is perceived to have (largely) ‘failed’ to effect broad-scale persuasion of childrearing and sexual practices. The South African HIV/Aids-epidemic is frequently figured – explicitly or implicitly - as a failure of disciplinary power within a westernized psy-complex matrix. For example, (a) disparate kinds of families, child-custody arrangements and parenting styles strain against functional imperatives of nuclear-families and child-centred interactions; (b) some mothers appear reluctant to perform sex-talk with children along advocated lines; and (c) constructions of ‘youth risk’ – particularly of girls and young women – claim heterosexually active young people as a potent epicentre of transmission.

Such realities are empirically rendered as 'behavioural indicators' (e.g. early ages of sexual activation, prevalence rates of teenage pregnancy, statistics of HIV-infection) within the South African public health industry (e.g. Campbell, 2003). In similar causal vein, they are also cast as powerful obstacles to the 'impact' of mass media communication in South Africa, in arguments about inadequate media-access, uneven media literacy, simplistic bio-medical 'information-driven' messaging about contagion, and deleterious, top-down (non-interactive) campaigning that fails to engage with inter-subjective negotiation of living in a context of 'advanced' or '2<sup>nd</sup> tier' HIV/Aids epidemic (e.g. Kelly, Parker & Oyosi, 2001). I review the interstices between psychological, HIV/Aids and mass media discourses – in peculiarly South African contexts of risk – in Chapter 4.

### Demarcating texts as surfaces of emergence

Such practices of government – and ungovernability – of families, mothering, sex and youth-risk of HIV/Aids have corporeal life-and-death implications then, as well as strong semiotic and textual aspects. This thesis turns to the ideological, discursive and rhetorical dilemma of 'persuasion' through these semiotic and textual aspects; and brandishes Foucauldian tools – to examine the role of the psy-complex in managing risky individuals and populations within an 'AIDS-machine' or discursive apparatus (cf. Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001). The selection of the *Lovelines* textual series as an anchor for discursive examination was not based on its representivity of contemporary South African HIV-awareness campaigning directed at floundering parents; and neither representative of *loveLife's* sprawling campaigning, which has accelerated away from reliance on print media into other technologies of transmission (see Chapter 4).

The rationale for selection of *Lovelines* was thus twofold. First, it provided a somewhat corroded/corrosive surface for the emergence of prevailing subjective and inter-subjective positions of power-knowledge between experts themselves, and between experts, mothers and youth. I had already established privileged access to text-production machinery at *Fairlady* through previous research on their advice columns (Wilbraham, 1994). And second, the concern with print media – and a particular women's magazine - was predicated

on an assumption that niche-audience construction, as a form of (class-based) media access, would be more regulated. This was in keeping with a focus on subject positioning through discourse practices of text-production and text-consumption. It is acknowledged that other media might produce different effects.

My discourse analytical mapping of persuasion in the *Lovelines* series begins with reading 'preferred positions' in the texts themselves (Chapters 6 & 7); and then, moves into the hurly burly of racialized, classed and acculturated positioning in discussions about 'real childrearing' with parents as text-consumers of *Lovelines* (Chapter 8). It is noted that the study incorporated further aspects related to discourse practices of *Lovelines* text-production in uneasy interstices between two media-agencies, and archival examination of *Fairlady's* representations of HIV/Aids and risk as they related to mother-positioning; but this institutional-ethnographic and genealogical work is not presented in this thesis.

### **Psychological government of mothering in an age of epidemic**

As *Fairlady* is targeted at a classed audience of South African women who are (mostly) mothers, this multifarious mapping of refracted inter-textual surfaces reads the preferred positioning of motherly subjects, and the fabrication of a particular kind of inter-subjective space between mothers and children to accommodate conversations about sex. The thesis asks two questions about such mediated childrearing or sex-talking practices. First, what mothering practices regarding (the risk-safety of) children's sex/uality are preferred, sanctioned, advocated and inscribed by *Lovelines* in an age of (HIV/Aids) epidemic? And second, how is 'persuasion' of mothers figured in *Lovelines* through discursive practices in texts, and reading/using texts?

Auspicious feminist and discursive critiques have formulated mother-regulation and surveillance through the discourses of childrearing along similar lines. For example, Riley (1983) examined the historicized psychological positioning of women as primary caregivers, and the mother-child dyad as profoundly influential on children's development. Chodorow (1978) follows this mothering-tack in a psychoanalytic (social object relations) account of

construction of (power-skewed) gendered identities, and inter-subjectivities. Several (British) historians and feminist critics have tracked child-rearing practices over the last 100 years – largely through parenting or mother-craft ‘manuals’, and the movement of such ‘expert advice’ into women’s magazines during the 1950s (Alldred, 1996a) - making points about the powerful role of expertise in the increasing normalization, and judgement, of good-mothering (e.g. Ehrenreich & English, 1979; Hardyment, 1983; Marshall, 1991; Newson & Newson, 1974; Singer, 1992; Urwin, 1985; Urwin & Sharland, 1992). Burman (1992, 1994) finds mother-blame operating in the guise of developmental psychology. But, increasingly with the rise of modern institutional government, the psy-complex has powered legal, educational and social welfare agendas of child protection and concerns about children’s safety and well being (e.g. Burman, 1994; J. Kitzinger, 1997; Parton, 1991; Popkewitz, 2003; Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers, 1992). Such shifts re-responsibilize (and pedagogize) mothering in significant ways.

Explicitly deploying Foucault’s (1977) *Discipline and punish* as a lens of government (see Chapter 2), Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) have explored the disciplinary targeting of mothers as pivots in apparatuses of social and family control, tasked with appropriately ‘socializing’ daughters through interacting with them in ‘child-centred’ ways (cf. Walkerdine, 1984). This work comes closest to my own through its particular attention to staging the minutiae (micro-practices) of mother-child communications.

Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) have explored – through reinterpretation of interviews/observations with British working- and middle-class mothers of 4-year old daughters – the ‘tangled web of powers and oppressions’ in how certain regulatory ideas about (good) mothering have become entrenched (p. 9). They argue that (middle classed) mothers buy into the ‘codified fears and fantasies’ that drive scientific theories of the maximization of children’s (intellectual) development through attunement and sensitivity to children’s ‘needs’ (p. 33). Such ‘child-centredness’ impels (middle classed) mothers towards constant nurturance and intellectual stimulation of children - through educative play and dialogical, reasonable talk - and ‘democratic’ and ‘harmonious’ relations with them to thwart (or mask) conflict; and thus, to ward off the trouble of frustration, rebellion,

aggression and experimentation (later on) due to 'unmet needs' and 'deficits' (p. 102). Thus, social tranquility and good citizenry is fabricated through 'socializing the child through the relay-point of the mother' (p. 101).

The territories, histories and imperatives of South African and British mothering would appear discontinuous; but there are uncomfortable nodes of colonial collusion in Walkerdine and Lucey's classing gaze. I will argue in following chapters for the governmental alliance between middle classed South African mothering and discourses of the westernized psy-complex, as cast against recalcitrant, uneducated, pre-modern, risk-saturated (African) 'others'. Filtered through their own British working-classed upbringings, Walkerdine and Lucey argue that (British) working class mothers do not regulate their daughters in the preferred (by psy-complex) 'child-centred' mode; parental coercion, and conflict with authority, is not glossed through subtle communicative work; and limits (of play, talk, time, backchat) are clearly etched. For this, (British) working class mothering is pathologized for not equipping girls with appropriate skills, values and self-esteem to succeed in competitive capitalistic market or sexual economies, and thus, environments of risk (cf. Burman, 1994; see 'culture of poverty' and 'poverty of culture' deficit theories in Chapter 4).

These ideas are extended in Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody's (2001) 'classing' of young women's fecundity and HIV-risk (p. 187-210). This research was based on interviews with young British women, and their mothers, from middle- and working class backgrounds. Here, (British) middle class girls' socialization – through relatively resource-rich and child-centred rearing – cuts a careful path towards 'achievement' through effort, encouragement and educational success. Risk-reductive actions with respect to sex – to avoid/abort unwanted pregnancy, to prevent HIV-infection - were imperative to avoid derailment of a promised promising future. (British) working class girls' passages to/through upward class mobility were harder to locate; and so, were derailed or delayed (or sometimes acquired) through powers/coercions of sex. While Walkerdine et al. posit both classed paths to female-subjectivity as onerous with contradictions and gendered self-work, they find

unplanned teenage pregnancy, elevated HIV-risk and poverty of resources 'lumped together as an overwhelmingly working class affair' (p. 193).

This thesis extends such thinking into explicit (empirical) concern with the discursive practices that embed particular childrearing materials for mothers that connect HIV-risk and sex pedagogy (as inter-generational communication) in the family cell as a node of cathexis. This (ambitiously) draws together several established threads of writing about (a) persuasive HIV/Aids awareness campaigning that is encoded with purposive messaging and preferred subject positions, and (b) governing mothers, adolescents and mothering through the expertise of the (western) psy-complex. In addition, (c) these writings are re-territorialized within South African discourses of HIV/Aids, which edge towards post-colonial interrogation of Foucault's neo-liberal notion of 'governmentality', as the regulatory practices of subjectification related to the 'the conduct of conduct' (Gordon, 1991).

#### **Positioning sexy/risky adolescents, positioning their policewomen**

Cindy Patton's (1996)<sup>5</sup> *Fatal advice* features (Foucauldian) government of sexual bodies as 'docile subjects' and 'good citizens' within the uneasy weave between two zones of HIV/Aids campaigning in America during the 1980s-1990s - viz. a national (or State) Aids pedagogy of measured, medicalized representations of contagion and containment, responsibility and compassion; and the 'minoritizing strategies' of (largely gay) Aids activism around normative, more explicit safer sex technologies within particular communities of practice. My interest in this thesis is the construction of youth-risk of HIV/Aids, and the inter-subjective responses of government (e.g. parenting praxes) such positioning calls forth from their good-citizen custodians (cf. Dean, 1994a). With regards youth, Patton (1996) demonstrates how mass media campaigning reduced the need for explicit risk-reduction information/skills through 'ghettoization of risk' (p. 36) – the collapsing of young people into the disparately classed and risked, subjective spaces they occupy. This was achieved through differential attachment of hegemonic theories of adolescence – 'storm-and-stress' and 'youth sub-culture' - to middle classed, black, drug-using or gay youth.

These discourses become totemic in their vigorous and various mobilizations in chapters that follow, and I briefly establish their discursive parameters here. Stanley Hall's (1904/1940) model of adolescence emerged within a time of concern by urban reformers, educators and parents (1890-1920, America) about youthful decadence and non-compliance (Santrock, 2001). Hall conceived 'adolescence' as a transitional period of '*storm-and-stress*' between the innocent savagery of childhood and knowing civilization of adulthood; as a time of moodiness, confusion, self-doubt, rebellion and sexual experimentation. This normative construction (empirically based on troubled/troublesome samples) has powerfully entered the public imagination by way of expert, scientific and popular scripts – from Anna Freud, to hyper-sexualized youth in HIV/Aids research, to Harry Potter, for example - that prescribe adolescent subjectivities and so-called 'abnormally normal', relative to supposedly mature adult, behaviours (Wyn & White, 1997).

Stormy and stressed adolescence is figured then as a phase of liminality triggered by biological turbulence, with concomitant psychological instability and sexual overwhelm. The pervasive cultural anxiety about adolescence pivots on the fabrication of the adolescent body as awash with hormones and as 'reproductively ready'; but that such corporeal adjustments to adulthood outstrip psychosocial maturity with respect to moral and intellectual reasoning capacities, emotional stability and autonomy, perspective-taking, intimate communication skills, sexual decision-making, life-path choices, and so on (see standard developmental psychology texts on 'adolescence': Arnett, 2004; Berk, 2003, 2005; Rice & Dolgin, 2005; Santrock, 2001). This biologically based, decontextualized-global construction positions adolescents as prone to the unwise influence of peers, to conflictual relationships with parents (and other authorities), and to irresponsible risk-taking and performance of 'adult behaviours', particularly sex (e.g. Griffin, 1997; Lerner, 2002; Patton, 1996; Wilton & Aggleton, 1991).

Similarly, the (sociological) *youth sub-culture view* of adolescence has discursive roots in post-World War 2 hedonism; the rebels-without-cause who constituted 'the other side of a generation gap', who were eliminated from the job market, and whose rebellious attitudes



and excessive patterns of consumption (of music, alcohol, cigarettes, sex) defined them as a deviant and defiant 'sub-culture' (Patton, 1996, p. 49). Such rebellions happened upon various causes through politicized activism during the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. anti-war movements, student protests, gay/women's liberation); but it fell to (then Marxist) cultural theorists – such as Hebdige (1979) and McRobbie (1980, 1991) - to formulate 'youth culture' as an active space (or position) of resistance towards the (middle class) ideologies and norms of adulthood, capitalist consumerism or 'femininity' (Garratt, 1997; Patton, 1996; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). Here the risks for youth are perceived, not as the mismatch between mature body and immature psyche (cf. storm-and-stress), but as restrictive parents/adults who fear the youthful body's capacities for sex, pleasure and transgression, and whose neurotic and conservative counsel youth are collectively impelled to reject as false consciousness (cf. Patton, 1996). Thus, through subversive stylistic innovation as 'techniques of the self' (e.g. punks, rappers, Goths), a resistant identity may be inscribed and shared with similar-others; *not* parents/adults (Danesi, 1994).

Patton (1996) finds mass media HIV/Aids awareness campaigning positioned dominant class American youth (white, middle-class, heterosexual) in terms of storm-and-stress adolescence; and thus steered them away from sex/risk through rigorous abstinence messaging and scientific 'facts' and 'statistics' about HIV-contagion they could not (personally, sexually) identify with. The normal-youthful-body, fragile as it was due to its propensity for risky sexual experience and coercion, was rendered safe within regulatory practices of family and school for the time being.

The tropes of risk for gay and black youth were altogether more florid – as sexualized 'youth sub-cultures' - and therefore considered ungovernable by parents, school, (heterosexual) peers or media. These discourses clearly operate differently in South African contexts of HIV/Aids risk (see Chapter 4), with one similarly racialized pattern. Black (American) youth were environmentally situated as 'where the trouble is' (p. 61) – a site of decayed urban ghetto, 'culture of poverty', and 'dysfunctional family' from which there is no escape. The black body/psyche was signified as 'pre-modern' (read primitive): as (heterosexually) hypersexual and virile/fecund, as potentially violent, as recalcitrant to discipline, and as

'hard to reach' in terms of propriety, campaigning, or theorization (p. 62). Such bodies (and the spaces they occupied) were transgressive, deficient and dangerous. Patton luridly points to the racism of such subjective fictions – viz. 'these are the specters of the Third World AIDS-epidemic... who threaten to explode out of the ghetto' (p. 57) – that loop back to colonial discourses about 'African Aids' and 'othering' sexual risk (cf. Irwin, Millen & Fallows, 2003; Oppong & Kalipeni, 2004; Patton, 1990a, 1992; Ratele, 2005).<sup>6</sup>

Tamsin Wilton (1997) reads these discursively distinctive (often reactionary and outmoded) assumptions about categories of sexual subjects in purposive HIV-awareness texts – for example, brochures, posters, leaflets and advertisements<sup>7</sup> – produced for different audiences. Along Foucauldian lines, she posits 'texts' – as any cultural artifact that carries meanings, here intentionally encoded with the politics of sexualities, gender and risk-safety – as 'instrumental to constitution of subjectivities and social norms' (p. 7), because we mediate the kind of person we will be through address and packaging of knowledge and actions made available to us. In other words, didactic texts on safer sex (or democratic childrearing practices) 'name us... (as) a taxonomic project of the self' (p. 14), and lay down the limits by which we organize lived experience of ourselves and/with others. Wilton's analysis of textual materials starkly demarcates the peculiar subjective territories discursively staked out as so-called 'risk-groups'.

Thus, texts about HIV-prevention that address gay men, lesbians, sex workers or heterosexual women/mothers constitute genres of sexual, subjective, inter-subjective and societal praxis. In Wilton's textual analysis, women-who-have-sex-with-men, for example, are addressed in non-erotic ways that (a) inscribe penile penetration as the functional finale, although technical details of this are hidden; (b) inscribe risks as inevitable implications of sex, and negotiating safer sex with men (p. 29-31); and (c) inscribe caring and responsibility (for men, children, family) rather than her own desire, pleasure and agency (p. 89). Such discourses inscribe both mothers' pedagogization of girls' sexualities in communicative exchanges about sex, and their own sexual practice with partners, in *Lovelines* (see Chapters 6 & 7). This thesis extends Wilton's textual analysis of positioning through incorporating the understandings/uses that audiences bring to purposive texts (cf.

'decoding') (e.g. Miller et al., 1998). This draws in the negotiated positioning of those who are called to respond inter-subjectively to constructions of risk-vulnerable categories, such as mothers responsive to adolescents.

These crisscrossing aims are folded into a Foucauldian exposition of government of maternal subjectivities; and are exercised through developing praxis of 'subject positioning' as analytical lens/tool. Thus, the operation of several levels of positioning – interpellation by prevailing discourses or inter-subjective negotiation within conversations or between texts (see Chapter 5) – is read in various sites of inter-subjectivity where texts are negotiated. This implicates, firstly, the fabrication of tiered, panoptic and custodial relationships between expertise, good-mothering and sexy/risky teenage daughter positions in *Lovelines* (Chapters 6 & 7); and secondly, the relationship between (preferred positions encoded in) the text and various mis/appropriative positions adopted by parents as readers (Chapter 8). Each excursion required renegotiation of Foucault-inflected discourse analytic technologies; and at this point the aims of the thesis turn to 'method'.

#### Discourse analytical technologies: coming together, falling apart

Discourse analytic approaches, and subject positioning, constitute the territories of Chapter 5; but I set out some signposts for the journey here. Social psychological 'discourse analysis' is taken as examination of the (social) natures, contexts and functions of spoken and written language (Wood & Kroger, 2000); but is customarily split into rival styles or schools. These appear as a binary between (a) a *discourse-as-interaction* approach, that offers close-grained, conversation analytical accounts of the action orientation of interactive talk in actual contexts (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 2003a, 2004a, 2004b); and (b) a *discourse-practice* approach inscribed by post-structuralism (Foucault, in particular), that offers investigations of discourse (as language, or texts), meanings and subjectivities in the service of power (e.g. Hollway, 1984a; I. Parker, 1992; Willig, 1999a, 2000). Although a broadly social constructionist approach to language is shared between (a) and (b), sharp edges of difference are reproduced through contestation of intentions, terminologies, praxis of unpacking 'talk' versus 'text', and critical implications of particular stances, caricatured at

their extremes as discursive determinism, or unfettered creative freedom as tool-users (Burr, 1995).

Several disenchanted discourse analysts have developed (c) synthetic marriages between the schools, incorporating (from Foucault) discursively positioned subjects *and* negotiation or resistance of these positions in conversations (e.g. Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). It is to this interstice that this thesis speaks; *not* in the sense of a 'synthetic model' like Wetherell's (1998), but of coming at a 'problematic' or 'communicative event' (e.g. inculcating imperatives for conversations about sex into families) from different directions, and heterogeneous positions on subject positions. Thus, this thesis generates shifting (but related) textual territories and contexts for different kinds of analysis. Firstly, *Lovelines* texts themselves are read in Chapters 6 and 7 using a version of Ian Parker's (1992) guidelines for analysis of discourses [style (b) above]; texts are approached as 'addressors' of audiences of subjects, that offer (preferred) 'positions' as ideological hailing. Secondly, discussions between parents about their parenting practices, after reading *Lovelines*, produce negotiated interactive positioning (within dominant discourses) that is unpicked in Chapter 8 through Wetherell's (1998) approach [style (c) above].

This thesis seeks then to layer and counterpoise directions, positions, levels, angles and pieces on media discourse, chapter by chapter. Read together, this approach sutures the schism between discourse analytic styles, but always partially; and leaves openings for them to fall apart again.

The approach to media discourse espoused in this thesis has been deeply etched by Fairclough's (e.g. 1992, 1995a, 1995b) attempts to combine micro-textual examination and social theory (macro-contextual analysis) to understand how inter/subjectivities are constituted in/through discourse. Fairclough's model of *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)* is not static – three discernible versions have hitherto emerged – and neither is it unitary (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).<sup>8</sup> CDA is not 'simply Foucauldian', but deploys a tough-going mix of social theoretical borrowings – from Foucault (1972, 1978), to Neo-Marxist

theoreticians of signification and media-spheres (e.g. Habermas, 1989; Pecheux, 1982), and latterly, critical/scientific realism (Bhaskar, 1986). This proliferation has produced a blizzard of concepts, and matrices of theories, jostling and colluding in complex underpinnings and overlays. Fairclough (1992) reiterates that he does not simply 'adopt' or 'adapt' Foucault's ideas, but instead 'puts them to work within a textually oriented discourse analysis' (p. 38).

The discourse analytical studies in this thesis were inspired by Fairclough's 2<sup>nd</sup> model of CDA - concerned with applying his 1<sup>st</sup> (micro-macro) model to media discourse (Fairclough, 1995a, 1998). Mine is a tactical and partial borrowing; there are elements of CDA – semiotic, linguistic, grammatical tools – I eschew. CDA is used here as a 'spine' of central ideas about media discourse, from an avowedly Foucauldian perspective, and analytical *modus operandi* that were flexible enough to strategically substitute other discourse analytic styles and tools at various points, to unpack the rhetoric of persuasion that underpins hegemony and government.

Fairclough's (1995a) examination of media discourse is conceived as an analysis of social problems as 'communicative events' – any specific event/s, activities or issues represented in textual form – and examination of the interrelations between imbricated facets of that textual event (p. 57), as:

- *Texture*: linguistic, semiotic and rhetorical aspects of texts, and their inter-discursive and inter-textual interactions;
- *Discourse practice*: chain-like mechanisms of targeted text-production (encoding), distribution (access/reach) and consumption (reception);
- *Socio-cultural practice*: texts as embedded within social, cultural, political or economic organizations of life – both as 'orders of discourse', and 'conditions of possibility' for their existence.

Fairclough's (1995a) 'media discourse' assumes that all forms of meaning-making (signs or representations, wittingly mobilized or not) make up an irreducible part of material social/discursive practices that *constitute* and are *constituted by* various crucial elements of

our everyday realities: forms of action; means of production and consumption; social relationships and 'selves' through subject positioning; cultural values; and texts of various sorts. Fairclough (1992) is critical of Foucault's genealogical method, and indeed post-structuralist approaches to discourse analysis, for their lack of analytical attention to *communicative* and *interactive* practice related to textuality – that is, writers writing texts to achieve particular things, and readers/users 'talking back' to expert-texts and academic readings of them (p. 57). This 'lack' limits resistance to representations, or various kinds of negotiated appropriations of preferred positions offered by texts; and creates an impression of individuals being haplessly subjected to immovably powerful discursive formations (see Chapter 5).

But Fairclough's own close-grained analyses of media discourse/texts have been criticized by CDA-proponents for this very lack. His analyses neglect explicit, empirical and systematic examination of 'discourse practice' – that is, (a) attention to bigger corpuses of discourse than single texts (e.g. Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002); (b) the arduous sourcing, writing and editing practices of text-production through routinized media institutional activity (e.g. Garrett & Bell, 1998; Richardson, 1998); and (c) text-reception by audiences of readers who both follow and defeat the most well-laid paths to preferred meanings (e.g. Chouliaraki, 1998). This thesis is thus inscribed by Fairclough's (1995a) Foucault-inflected sense of media discourse as (inescapable) social and subjective practice through texts (Chapters 6 & 7); but it is written against his lack of (c) examination of the dynamic mis/appropriations by readers/users (subjects) of preferred positions encoded into texts (Chapter 8). Here, discursive machinery is restored as partially persuaded parents 'talk back' to texts. I return to Fairclough's definitions of discourse below.

### 3. READING (PURPOSIVE) MASS MEDIA DISCOURSE

#### **Different horses for different courses: contexts of interpretation**

This thesis is also written against my own discourse analytical writing on advice columns in women's magazines (Wilbraham, 1994, onwards). My Foucault-modulated readings of

advice texts have taken bodies as targets and instruments of disciplinary power, and site for negotiation of (heterosexual) feminine subjectivities in relation to men (cf. Hollway, 1984a).<sup>9</sup> My interest in such mediated didactic texts is that they reproduce the discursive limits, subject positions and cultural scripts by which we navigate our lives. Readers are hailed by the narrative confessions of crisis, confusion or transgression; and are re-inscribed with 'normal' operations of bodies, psyches, sexuality, relationships and childrearing by panoptic gazes of expertise. Following Foucauldian ideas on disciplinary power, surveillance, normalization and subjectivity (e.g. Foucault, 1977, 1978), readers - in the private cells of their homes - are invited to reflect on themselves 'from the standpoint of a text' (Mills, 1997, p. 92); and impelled to act (to 'perform' or to 'become') in particular ways. Thus, advice texts reproduce the institutionalized knowledges and techniques that govern our docile self-formation in late (neo-liberal) modernity (Wilbraham, 1999b). But, as Mills (1995) suggests, the perennial recycling of womanly malfunctioning in advice texts displays women's difficulty with and resistance towards fitting into appropriate feminine or maternal norms – and the constant need of expert help.

Many of these ideas run like rhizomes into my analysis of mothering, sex-talk with children, and HIV-risk in the *Lovelines* series in this thesis; but with some tricky re-territorializations. Firstly, my earlier analyses of advice were concerned with 'reading texts' from various positions on knowledge and power – realist, feminist and Foucauldian (McRobbie, 1991; see below) - and speculating on how texts were un/wittingly set up to produce particular readings, and how they might be 'consumed' by ordinary women/readers. I sought (differently) in this *Lovelines*-analysis to examine the social embeddedness of media discourse and texts; that is, to open up the discursive practices that fabricate an ongoing inter-textual process of negotiation, whereby the reader is always already constituted in the discourses that inscribe the production and the reception of the text (Fairclough, 1992, 1995a; Mills, 1997). The genealogical and institutional-ethnographical exposition of discursive machinery of text-production will (due to space constraints) appear elsewhere; but I have endeavoured to display 'ways of reading', as targeted subjects talk back to both my academic readings of texts, and their mis/appropriations of childrearing advice and HIV/Aids risk-safety (Chapter 8).

Secondly, the focus on *Lovelines* – as an intentionally commissioned, didactic textual series on HIV/Aids risk, produced by a specialist mass communications agency (*loveLife*), and appearing in a women's magazine (*Fairlady*) – crosses 'orders of discourse', between (a) advice-genres in women's magazines, and (b) purposive mass mediated campaigning. It is, at once, both of these, and neither. This (Foucauldian) crossing – reading *both* as media discourse - usefully blurs divisional institutional operations and effects between commercial (entertaining, leisure reading) and public health (imperative, educative, persuasive reading) contexts of production, distribution and consumption of health-promotional information (Fairclough, 1995a), along the lines of (social) marketing of particular, institutionally fabricated subjectivities as preferred, prescribed subject positions. The conflation also mobilizes (as direct socio-political force) the notion of 'epidemiological risk' - as an unsettling tactic of insecurity and uncertainty - to fuel Foucauldian government through surveillance of material acts of doing/saying particular things, through disciplinary power (Rose, 1990).

However, while various theoretical readings of didactic and/or entertaining representations within women's magazines from X, Y or Z perspective are deemed acceptable (or innocuous, trivial or toothless) within particular interpretative contexts, a different scenario is routinely figured with 'reading' purposive campaigning. Here purposive campaigning as a 'harder', input-for-output, scientific genre slides inexorably towards life-death matters, instrumental manipulation of encoding/decoding texts, and empirical measurement of evidence of 'persuasion' through behavioural indicators. Such public health (activist, realist, epidemiological) audiences demand objective evaluations and reliable 'findings' – along the lines of enlightened progressive science, towards closer approximations of truth, a basis for policy and intervention rollout decisions – rather than unfolding readings of persuasive but partial positioning that inevitably slips. I return to these issues in Chapter 4, contextualizing a politics of 'readings' of representations versus evaluations of 'effects' of health educative media campaigning within South African discourses of HIV/Aids risk.



My earlier writing on print mediated advice was influenced by McRobbie's (1991) examinations of magazines directed at young women. McRobbie classifies strands of theorization about reading advice in women's magazines according to different stances on knowledge and power. Thus, didactic advice might be read by '*realists*' as a neutral/useful information-service, that produces desired effects on an audience; by '*feminists*' as ideological manipulation of (exploited) women-victims; and by '*Foucauldians*' as a governmental site of confluence between normative surveillance, disciplinary power and resistance.<sup>10</sup>

There are obvious problems with simplification in this typology. It reproduces the 'advice column' as a unique and isolated site of confession and normalizing implantation of expertise in women's magazines, when this functionality – in magazines, and (multi) media discourse/events more generally – is now considered pervasive (Fairclough, 1995a; Wilbraham, 1994, 1996c). It naively stereotypes complex positions of 'realism' or 'feminism' as unitary, when they are internally heterogeneous, contested and slippery; and it conflates people (writers of articles examining advice) with positions, disallowing multiplicity and hybridization between them (e.g. critical realism, Foucauldian-feminism, etc.). It is more useful then to think of these strands as discourses about knowledge and power that operate inter-discursively within and between authors' ideas/texts.

I have substantively reviewed writings on various aspects of advice in/and women's magazines elsewhere (see Wilbraham, 1994); but I will use and bend McRobbie's lenses here to broadly overview critical arguments about stylistics of reading (and writing) didactic media discourse. These are wide, complex and treacherous territories, encompassing media and cultural studies, readership theories, philosophical wrangling about human agency and ideology, and so on. Bravely swallowing agoraphobia, this review seeks to briefly skim over and selectively mark (rather than resolve) some of the struggles to control the meaning and use of didactic texts. This also (hopefully) serves to introduce the critical voices and positions that chatter around Foucault's ideas about government; these arguments are extended in following chapters.

A last point concerns disciplinary splits between (intellectual) contexts/communities of interpretation of media discourse. This implicates, principally, tension between schools of media effects<sup>11</sup> that emphasize 'media power', as ideological impacts on duped, compliant subjects, and 'people power', where users create and resist meanings (Dahlgren, 1998). As Stevenson (1993, p. 181-185) has argued, this binary is reproduced through theoretical traditions in media studies that have examined (a) the society-level *status-quo functions of mass media*, e.g. political economies, capitalistic ideologies' hailing apparatuses, or the demise of the 'public sphere'; and (b) *audience-research*, that is concerned with everyday practices of participation in media cultures (cf. Fiske, 1998). Such traditions have relied on *either* textual analysis *or* reception research with samples of media-users to hold 'media power' and 'people power' respectively, in place (Garrett & Bell, 1998).

Thus, the '*sharp reading*' of (academic) textual analyses use particular methodological techniques and social theoretical tools to sift systematically through words, to re-read sections and relate them to one another – and in so doing, 'uncover' ideologies and speculate about how they work [the (a) tradition above]. Wicomb (1994) – in a trenchant analysis of an advert for family planning directed at black South African mothers – compares this tactic of sharp (or close) reading with the so-called '*slack reading*' of ordinary audiences of media-users, who process such messages quickly, and are capable of producing, when asked, critical readings as they relate messages to their own experience or other discursive positions, even while 'buying into' dominant ideologies to varying extents [the (b) tradition above] (cf. Alldred, 1996a; J. Kitzinger, 1998a; Smith, 1990). I follow this example in counterpoising sharp (Chapters 6 & 7) and slack readings (Chapter 8) in this thesis. I reiterate that my interest is in the rhetoric/s of persuasion and negotiation of (partial) subject positioning, rather than in 'measurements' of its effects or advocacy of better-encoded texture to effect decoding compliance (see Chapter 4).

Stuart Hall's (1980) model of encoding/decoding – in somewhat updated forms – has inscribed my approach to unpicking persuasiveness of didactic texts, and its footprints will be evident in the realist, feminist and Foucauldian readings below, and in my resistance to univocal determinism of ideological interpellation that follows (Althusser, 1971; see Chapter

5). Hall's British-Marxist (and later more Foucauldian) model binds ideological effects to text-production, that is, media institutional procedures and technical equipment used to manufacture and 'encode' texts; and to text-reception through the situated strategies of 'decoding' available to audiences of readers. Thus, texts are encoded with 'preferred meanings' that invite readers to decode them in line with dominant ideological meaning systems – countering negotiated or oppositional readings by 'closing' texts (e.g. limiting representations of 'healthy' subject positions, narratives, practices or alternatives). Hall (1980) explains that the mode of 'decoding' adopted – the way of reading - depends largely on a reader's position in the social formation and wider frameworks of power, and on the range of knowledges and experiences the reader has access to. I recursively return to how the notion of resistance is managed (or theorized) within realist, feminist and Foucauldian frames below. It is noted that the following sections review largely European and American writings; I return to 'reading' South African media discourse in Chapter 4.

#### **Information will set you free - so don't die of ignorance**

In McRobbie's (1991) typology of writings about advice texts, the 'realist' strand connotes the assumed neutrality of information-services in a direct correspondence between input and outcome, between encoding and decoding. This appearance of realism is constituted through objectivist and humanist stances. Firstly, objects in the physical, social and psychological world are assumed to exist and to have properties independently of our discourse about them (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Language is thus a transparent medium for reflecting and accessing real problematic experiences, and (helpful) expert knowledges about those experiences. Secondly, the assumption of an Enlightenment position means that the forward march of scientific and technological knowledge has produced reliable, authorized forms of knowing, taken as capable of transforming the troubled experiences of ordinary people. Such progress establishes a hierarchy between experts-who-know, and those who are assumed to want-to-know, and who are able to act autonomously and rationally according to information received (cf. 'liberal humanism': Dews, 1987).<sup>12</sup>

Such realist ideas are well documented within various writings about giving-advice through women's magazines (and newspapers), and the 'strategies of health communication' and 'reception research' that inscribe text-production procedures (e.g. Fairclough, 1995a; Hermes, 1995; Landers, 1961; Makins, 1975; McRobbie, 1991; Savage, 1998; Westheimer, 1981; Wilbraham, 1994, 1996c, 1999a; Winship, 1987).<sup>13</sup> From these sources, the following assumptions about advice and audiences would seem pivotal:

- ❑ Accurate information from experts, combined with real life narratives, (directly) destigmatizes problems, erases ignorance/myths, and empowers readers to act constructively.
- ❑ The quality of information purveyed has 'improved' historically, through import of stronger presences and counsel of (syndicated global, and local) institutionally specialized experts.
- ❑ Styles of information giving have long emphasized (seemingly contradictory) non-judgement, optimism and frankness; but increasingly valorize (abstract) institutionalized 'expert-know-how', or advisors' relevant *personal* experience as forms of authority/empathy.
- ❑ Audience parameters are 'known' through regular, independently audited, quantitative market research surveys on circulation and readership-demographics of media products.
- ❑ Reception is assessed through anecdotal responses from individual readers, usually in written form. Formal audience-research is not conducted by media-corporations unless media products are to be re-positioned in a market to (more defined) target niches, or new products launched/tested.

These realist views on 'advice' are counterpoised against the altogether fiercer scientific realm of purposive, mass mediated, health promotional campaigning – as a theory- and methodology-driven search for measureable effects of preferred meanings on populations (cf. 'techno-scientific', and 'epidemiological risk' constructions in Chapter 2). In Chapter 4, I return to consider the dominance of such 'evaluations' of persuasion in HIV/Aids-prevention research; and evaluations of *loveLife's* campaigning in particular. In its most simple (and now outmoded, demonized) 'direct effects' forms, purposive campaigning

assumes a linear process of information-transmission and cure (cf. the 'magic bullet', 'hypodermic syringe', 'conveyor-belt' ideas). Here an expert message is intentionally pitched at a known audience; and the movement by its receivers from ignorance, to knowledge, motivation, intention and healthy action is cast as 'caused' by persuasiveness of the message (Piatrow, Kincaid, Rimon & Rhinehart, 1997).

This conveyor-belt of meaning naively assumes direct (or eager realist) correspondence between encoded messaging and decoding by individual readers (Morley, 1988), which is then further generalized to populations. It also assumes direct correspondence between decoded/negotiated meaning and sustained right action in the world. Both assumptions are dubious, and capture the flak directed at Hall's (1980) earlier versions of encoding/decoding. For example, Stevenson (1995) tackles Hall's ham-fisted (Marxist) assumptions of media discourse as an autonomous, State-serving, ideological apparatus in neo-liberal democracies, duping subjects with expertise, and manipulating them as puppets. But Hall's (1997) later remodeling produces a useful (Foucauldian) heuristic to think about the increasingly elaborate manufacturing effort put into rhetorical persuasion of didactic texts along psychosocial and representational lines, to shift audiences towards the benefits of the risk-reducing, life-saving, health-enhancing 'preferred meaning', and apparently self-chosen, self-regulatory action along these lines.

From the slippage between encoding, decoding and action, has sprung a pragmatic public health industry that uses a behavioural science approach to measuring and predicting persuasive effects of purposive mass communication campaigning; and which deploys a plethora of (predominantly) social cognition theoretical frameworks to establish psychosocial factors that facilitate or impede healthy behavioural changes as a result of health education materials, e.g. the health belief model, health locus of control theory, protection motivation theory, theory of reasoned action, the self efficacy model, etc. (see reviews: Airhihenbuwa & Collins, 2000; Bandura, 1989, 1992; Conner & Norman, 1995; Glanz, Lewis & Rimer, 1990; Piatrow et al., 1997; UNAIDS, 1999).

Such theories grasp at the proliferating grids of factors and forces – *intrinsic* to the messaging itself (e.g. access, clarity of articulation, contextual detail provided); *intrinsic* to the individual receiver of messaging (e.g. comprehension, readiness, motivation, skills); and *extrinsic* to the individual, incorporating contexts of practical use of messaging (e.g. levels of social support and normative pressure) – that determine the movement of persuasion into sustained, lived practice (cf. Naidoo & Wills, 2000). As South African HIV/Aids activists have noted, such theories tend to blame either faulty mass media messaging or faulty individual reader/recipients for the lack of desired effects; and leave the wider socio-structural power dynamics that block transformation well alone (e.g. Campbell, 2003). I return to health behaviour change theories, and resistances to them, in Chapter 4.

But the crucial point in this realist/pragmatist wrestling with meaning and docile action is the enmeshment – at theoretical and methodological levels - between encoding and decoding processes (cf. Fairclough, 1995a; Hall, 1997). The preferred message is now explicitly pitched at an audience of (recalcitrant) subjects, empirically tested on a sample of that audience, and tweaked until it produces preferred decoding action.<sup>14</sup> Resistant or negotiated misappropriations are systematically sniffed out, and extinguished. Such representational work maps a complex matrix of variables that need to be in place for particularly targeted mediated messages to ‘work’ along the lines of ‘preferred meanings’. The structuration of South African audiences by class, race, language, age, gender, urban/rural-living, and so on, produce skewed access to the magic bullets of mass media campaigning; and further could be expected to produce unpredictable readings in terms of preferred, negotiated or oppositional codes, based on the relevance of messaging to their lived circumstances (e.g. Ang, 1991; Hall, 1980). South African women’s magazines struggle with similar heterogeneities (and shifts) in audience-construction, even within narrowly defined niche/target readerships (Paice & O’Sullivan, 1999).

### **Feminist suspicions: tripping over ideology**

McRobbie’s (1991) ‘feminist’ take on mediated advice is suspicious about the operation and effects of ideology. Thompson’s (1990) oft-cited definition of ideology, as ‘meaning in the

service of power' (p. 12), is broad enough to capture older and newer styles in which power is made to appear in feminist readings of media discourse (Mills, 1994, 1995). In Mills' formulations, an older style inscribes media power over passive women through its signifying power to make hegemonic, preferred meanings stick – grand narratives that serve the patriarchal and/or capitalist status quo, rather than women's best interests. Such *misrepresentations*, as false consciousness that dupes women, are uncovered through various deconstructive readings of women's magazines. In newer styles of feminist readings of media discourse, attention shifts to reader-power (or active audiences) in the negotiation of meaning in/around discursive limits; and these powers – to collude, to reproduce, to resist, to ridicule, to flagrantly misappropriate dominant meanings – are located through Foucault-inflected (and other theoretical) interpretations, and empirical investigations of readership (cf. Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001; McRobbie, 1994).

I sketch these imbricated feminist styles in broad strokes and counter-strokes here – for different reasons. Older style feminist stylistics have tackled regulative childrearing advice (amongst other oppressions) in media discourse; and newer style feminist stylistics are aligned with my own Foucauldian-feminist position, which interrogates notions of hegemonic 'ideology' from an ex-colonized marginality or multiplicity of 'Third World' Southern Africa (see Chapter 4).

'First wave' feminist media criticism - circa 1970s-1980s - was inscribed with (Marxist) indignation about the disempowering effects of ideology as 'false consciousness'. Ideology was understood to have pervaded the genre of women's magazines, and hid its operations of alienation and oppression in the powerfully seductive guise of entertainment, escape and pleasure (e.g. Winship, 1980, 1985, 1987). Here, 'alienation' worked to individualize women's problems, and to isolate them (in the domestic cell of media-consumption) from collective mobilization against structural forms of oppressive power. 'Genre' pays attention to how an agreed code or set of conventions between text-producer and audience shapes the expectations of the reader (Hermes, 1995); and here, effectively constructs an 'interpretive community' of brainwashed conspirators (cf. Freund, 1987). These critiques are characterized then by strong whiffs of conspiracy (manipulation behind the scenes), and

concern for audiences of women-readers as they are 'socialized' into subordinated positions through the content and form of magazines, and proffered information or advice. Repetition is marked as an ideological strategy of normalization, with the endless recycling of particular issues – delimiting the bounds of what is probable and possible, calculable and fixable.

Ideological power was seen as vested in the content of the text itself to produce a 'cult of femininity' (Ferguson, 1983). The coupling of thin-body imagery to advertising particular consuming and body-vigilant lifestyles for women is well documented (e.g. Coward, 1984; Ferguson, 1978; Williamson, 1978; Winship, 1987). Women's magazines also reproduce taken-for-granted associations between women and the domestic cell; namely sex, intimacy and relationships (e.g. Ballaster, Beetham, Frazer & Hebron, 1991; Coward, 1984; Williamson, 1986), and mothering children (e.g. Alldred, 1996a; Marshall, 1991; Wicomb, 1994). Thus, for example, representations of the pleasures and rewards of fulltime-mothering, for mothers *and* children, were found to be (middle) classed, to reinforce women's economic dependence on men, and to blame women who do not mother within the taken-for-granted, western, nuclear-family, heterosexual deployments of alliance (Burman, 1994). The judgements as 'bad partners to men' or 'bad mothers of children' that accompany feminine identifications with inadequacy forge women's relations of dependence on forms of institutional expertise (e.g. Coward, 1984; Ehrenreich & English, 1979).

### **Foucauldian-feminist negotiations of/with swirling powers**

Such analyses of male experts, or patriarchy-colluding expertise, as forms of social control of women draw (implicitly) on Marxist ideas of ideological duping. They lose incisiveness when considering contemporary media discourse practices where (most) women's magazine editors, and (many) childrearing experts *and* public health activists, are women; and (some) explicitly claim 'feminist' allegiance. Not that this removes relations of power, but it shifts attention to how expertise (and its powers) is constituted through discourse itself (Alldred, 1996a).



Coward (1984) takes a Foucauldian-feminist line in her interpretation of the 'double-edged sword' of women's reliance on expertise. The route to 'expert help' is forged in women's magazines through talking openly about problems; an inter-subjective style which is inscribed through the naturalized ways in which feminine interaction is organized in magazines (cf. Smith, 1988, 1990). The register of 'gossipy confidences' about domestic failings mimics the privacy, intimacy and support of sharing problems with trusted confidantes (e.g. mothers, friends, partners or therapists); and simultaneously, through media distribution, fashions an 'imagined audience' of feminine sisters who feel the same way, and vicariously confess. But, as Coward (1984) warns, the ideological effects of overarching institutionalized imperatives to talk-about-*everything* with *whomever* are gendered (e.g. *women* talking to children/partners about sex). And they reproduce (a) surveillance, regulation and blame by pervasive grids of expert-knowledge-norms, and (b) spiraling vulnerability, disappointment and anxiety for women when their revelatory talk is not reciprocated by (men) partners or by their children (see Chapters 3 & 7).

Mills (1994, 1997) has written of the pivotal (if contested) contributions to feminist readings of media discourse of Foucault's notion of power as a polar and/or circular matrix of forces and micro-practices in everyday-living that *produce* (or make possible) particular meanings, positions, subjectivities, expertise, relations and texts; rather than a sovereign mechanism of monolithic authority over an oppressed individual/group (see Chapters 2 & 5). Thus, even while Foucault's (1978, 1980, 1982) power constrains what is possible, it is rescued from brute prohibition by its counter-stroke of resistance – which means that the operation of power does not totally succeed or totally fail, but works partially, and is constantly re-inscribed. The subject of power is a 'subject' in both senses of this term: a being endowed with certain capacities and possibilities for action; and subjected to power relations (Young, 1987).

This has left Foucauldian-feminist discourse theorists pondering about the power of the (gendered) reader in the 'negotiation' of meaning, viz. 'to what extent can she resist the dominant address of the text, and construct alternative reading positions' (Mills, 1994, p. 1)?

I will not recycle a review of decades of complex text-reader reception theories (see Freund, 1987); but offer two points about such shifts towards 'people power' – one methodological, and one ontological, although these inter-mingle as they pertain to strands of (Foucault-inflected) subject positioning that constitute the discourse analytical lenses of this thesis (see Chapter 5).

Methodology first: newer stylistics of feminist reading have pointedly shifted away from 'sharp readings' of texts by one (academic, feminist) reader (e.g. Ferguson, 1983; Winship, 1987), towards combination-analyses of texts and 'slack reader' audience-research (e.g. Ballaster et al., 1991; Blix, 1992; Hermes, 1995; McRobbie, 1991; Radway, 1987; Steiner, 1992). This is a tactic that is overlaid with many theoretical resonances; and has produced new spaces for interactive meaning-negotiation and resistance. For example, McRobbie (1991) has positioned her work on reception of magazines by working class girls as follows: (a) inscribed by the 'modern feminine subject' of post-structuralism, who appears as a reflexive, unstable figure capable of resistance (and not a dupe of media power); and (b) influenced by 'the-interpretive-turn' in media theory, with audience research articulating death-of-the-author and birth-of-the-reader positions (see Chapter 5). In a series of interviews and discussions with girls about how they read or used *Jackie* and *Just Seventeen* magazines, McRobbie explored the possibility of a resistant reader by locating negotiated or oppositional reading strategies that challenged preferred codes (cf. Hall, 1980).

It is now widely understood – from several similarly focused studies on uses/gratifications of women's magazines (e.g. Ballaster et al., 1991; Blix, 1992; Hermes, 1995; McRobbie, 1991; Steiner, 1992) – that media discourse is consumed with minimal attention. Thus, magazines (and 'advice') are read quickly, piecemeal, between/during other tasks, and interspersed with exposures to other media programming/products. Bits of useful information are picked up, but featured issues/information are just as likely to be skipped over (if boring, repetitive, irrelevant, too-heavy or anxiety-provoking), or openly ridiculed (if presented in stereotypical ways).

## So, reader resistance means... Escape?

As Mills (1994) warns, there are real dangers of naïve empiricism in the search for 'true' and 'real' readers through reception research (p. 5), and in taking such inflammations of resistance ('slack readings') as evidence of encouraging, liberating refusal of ideological positioning. After all, it is difficult for readers to account for the intuitive, interpretive process by which they read, and put specific tactics gleaned to use; such accounts are inevitably produced for our own (dis/approving, theory-inflected, deconstructive) audiences/analyses as researchers (Mills, 1994). These methodological qualms speak directly to 'negotiation' of subjectivities within dominant meanings, as a tension between agency (as creativity, as resistance) and structure (as discursive limits). This confers with Wetherell's (1998) synthetic style of subject positioning in interactive discourse (see Chapter 5).

If meaning is not 'located' in texts to be simply decoded, then a first issue to arise is readers' access to resources for and strategies of resistance – that is *outside* of the interpretive communities that texts encode/inscribe as subjects (e.g. exposure to other forms/sources of childrearing knowledge: Alldred, 1996a). While socio-economic class is often thought to mediate access to media and levels of (critical) media literacy (Pechoux, 1982), contradictory findings suggest that classed reading codes are unpredictable. In British media studies, for example, Morley (1992) found working class audiences watched more television less critically than others; while McRobbie's (1991) working class girls displayed high levels of resistance to dominant meanings.

This ushers in a second phalanx of questions about the meanings of 'resistance' to persuasion by media discourse. For example, why is resistance so vaunted or desirable in reading didactic texts – within women's magazines, say, or in other purposive mass media campaigning – that relate to life/death matters of risk-reduction (J. Kitzinger, 1998a)? Thus, didactic texts come closer to the 'truthful statements' issued by institutional experts in Foucault's archaeology; not general, conversational utterances or speech acts (see Chapter 5). If resistance is desirable or inevitable, then where is such resistance locatable – in the

text, reader, reading or context of use (Mills, 1994)? If material is read as 'boring', or is 'ridiculed' or 'skipped', does this mean that we escape recruitment as subjects? And beyond the pleasures of semiotic insurgency, of course, what do readers *actually do* with what they find useful?

And so, onto the ontological matter: the chief proponents of subjective insurrection and fragmentation in postmodern social and media theory would see the fleeting moments of emotional and practical knowing, the free-floating resistances, as the very serving devices available to the postmodern subject (Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001). For example, De Certeau (1988) and Fiske (1989) argue that texts are basically 'open' to be read in any way, and do not have the power to impose preferred meanings or impel sustained action. Everyday guerrilla tactics - *la perruque* - are made up of spontaneous, swarming ways of subverting dominant institutional power/knowledge. These tactics proliferate within postmodern media discourse, conceptualized as technologically hybridized, rhizomatically globalized, and vigorously inter-textual (Stevenson, 1995).<sup>15</sup> Uneasy aspects of such inter-textual flows, pluralities of meaning and 'surface appearance' of resistances are incorporated in the mass multi-mediated campaigning strategies of *loveLife*, and are also seen to function in rivalries between media products (and persuasive effects) of purposive campaigns (see Chapter 4).

As I suggested in the section on realism, the public health approach to mass mediated communication seeks exactly to standardize representations in and interpretations of didactic texts to avoid (risky) resistances due to misunderstandings or perceived irrelevance to their circumstances. Such texts are 'strategically encoded' with institutionalized, scientific, sometimes contextually appropriate 'statements' of information, and therefore not conceived as 'polysemantic' in the same way that the iconography of Madonna (Fiske, 1989), or televised soap operas (Ang, 1991), are.

Marxist media theorists find such fleeting-guerrilla postmodern subjectivities complicit or symbiotic with the ideology of rank consumerism and superficial brand-consciousness of 'lifestyles' in late capitalism (e.g. Jameson, 1991; Kaplan, 1988). Habermas (1989) bemoans

the construction of people as fragmented spectators of events through modern media, rather than as active, participating, dialoguing, embodied citizens in a truly 'public sphere' of rational critique. Habermas' (1983) caricature of Foucault as a 'neo-conservative postmodernist' – along the lines of semiotic plurality and consumerist lifestyles (above) – would seem over-zealous; and to misread the 'complicitous critique' of post-structuralism (Hutcheon, 1988; see also I. Parker, 1992: Chapter 5).<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Habermas articulates standard Neo-Marxist resistance to Foucault's positions on (institutionalized) discourses, manufactured truth-regimes, diffused power, and lack of a transformational dialectic (see P. Patton 1998; and Chapters 2 & 5 for Foucault's position/s and further Marxist resistances).<sup>17</sup>

Foucauldian-feminists who have actively theorized textuality, meaning-negotiation and subjectivities have drawn attention to the ideological (and discursive) resources out of which didactic messaging and texts are forged; and how readers may be 'alerted' – through certain recognizable clues, traces, evidence, frames, views, problems, signposts, positions – to the limits of possible interpretations (e.g. Mills, 1994; Smith, 1990). But, crucially, messages are not simply univocal, nor straightforwardly decoded and absorbed by readers; neither do they simply reproduce ideologies. As Mills (1994) has cogently argued: texts may produce competing interpretations because they (unwittingly) contain several messages that are struggling for dominance; and they 'often contain information apart from ideological messages, which may work to undercut the dominant ideological themes' (p. 10), through opening up negotiation-positions. I return in Chapter 5 to set out several forms of subject positioning praxis, including notions of 'negotiation' along these Foucauldian-feminist lines (e.g. Smith, 1990; Wetherell, 1998).

### **Foucault, like power, is everywhere**

I have tried in the above section to sketch some of the crossover readings of media discourse that happen in the interstices between feminist and Foucauldian approaches to knowledge and power. I return to frissons in such intersections in Chapters 3 and 5. McRobbie's (1991) strand of (purely) 'Foucauldian' understandings of the operations and effects of didactic

media discourse emphasizes the establishment of a public plane of witness of problematical experience through confession, testimony and expository case-studies; to produce normalizing effects on audiences of reading subjects through panoptic surveillance by institutionalized expertise, and government by disciplinary power (cf. Coward, 1984; Mills, 1995; Wilbraham, 1994). Smith (1990) further suggests that media discourse displays discursive links between people/positions that inscribe relations of knowing and ruling (e.g. expert-mother, mother-daughter, husband-wife); and readers are invited to actively work through those subject positions, and inter-subjectivities, in a process of negotiating discursive constraints, that is always open to random acts of collusion, resistance and slippage.

Foucault's conceptual and genealogical tools have produced a rich seam of interpretive writing about the functions of didactic media discourse that speculate about reader-subject relations and positioning (see Chapter 5). Much of this work relies on sharp readings of texts/archives rather than audiences 'talking back' (cf. Fairclough, 1995a; McRobbie, 1991; Mills, 1994, 1995). Elsewhere, I have reviewed three 'directions' of Foucauldian scholarship on media discourse (see Wilbraham, 1994), and I cursorily sketch them here in order to extend and weave them into government of HIV/Aids risk-safety through regulation of mothering (from Chapter 2 onwards):

- *Enlightenment-critique* – as genealogies of historicized media discourse that challenge 'accumulated scientific knowledge' as truthful, progressive and liberating. Socially expedient upsurges of knowledge about particular modes of living (e.g. mothering, sexual practice) are instead coupled with normalization and social control through the fabrication of audiences of autonomous, risk-aware, self-reflective, entrepreneurial, responsible subjects.
- *Capillarization of power into micro-practices* - rather than only located in the end-points of macro-structures. Multiplicity of subject positions and interstices between them offer spaces from which multivalent powers may be performed and resisted in minutiae of practices in daily life.
- *Sex, sexuality and surveillance* – as critical writing inspired by Foucault's (1978) 'repressive hypothesis', on contemporary techniques of incitement of sex/uality that

have proliferated in historicized (psychoanalytic, feminist, sexological) disciplinary waves since the 1970s. Such fleshy liberations enmesh subjects in an ever more intricate apparatus of power that fabricate and govern bodies/selves.

Foucault's (1991a) 'governmental rationality' within neo-liberal capitalist democracies connects an ensemble of forces of power/knowledge between micro- and macro-practices of normalization. For example, mothers are impelled to talk with children about sex along lines of psy-complex, epidemiological knowledges of risk-safety, and globally decreed children's rights (see Chapter 3). Genealogical studies of various historicized constructions of knowledge/norms related to medicalization and psychologization, as ever more sophisticated and pervasive forms of population control through disciplinary power, are not new (e.g. Armstrong, 1983, 1985, 1990; Arney & Bergen, 1984; Donzelot, 1980; Foucault, 1965, 1976, 1978; Nettleton, 1992; Parton, 1991; Rose, 1985, 1990, 1998). But the HIV/Aids epidemic harnesses all of the above ideas about kinds of sex, sexualities, selves, relationships, health, power, parenting, risk-safety, science and media discourse into seemingly acephalous proliferation of attempts to 'govern risk' (or sexual welfare) through responsible citizenship (Patton, 1996; Singer, 1993).

The upsurge of critical examinations of so-called '*New Public Health*' – the governmental surveillance of the ethical imperatives of individual responsibility for their own healthy bodies and minds in an age of risk, through lifestyle choices (Petersen & Lupton, 1996)<sup>18</sup> – has emerged from a nexus of post-structuralist disputes in various social scientific and humanities disciplines over appropriate theoretical/methodological tools to examine 'sociologies' of health and illness (e.g. Nettleton, 1995; Petersen & Waddell, 1998). Such interstices have brought social theory-rich, intellectual perspectives to bear on the biomedical, 'evidence-based', behavioural, and strongly politicized, arena of public health.

Contemporary writings/readings of new public health pertaining to discursive apparatuses that embed the HIV/Aids epidemic find the fabrication of 'caring selves' around a central sign of sexuality/alliance; and this implicates disciplinary praxis in webs of sites/techniques of risk-prevention simultaneously, e.g. treatment-provision, purposive campaigning, media

discourse, popular literature, parenting practices, epidemiological surveillance of norms, policy-formation, schools-based sex education curricula, and so on (e.g. Alaszewski, Harrison & Manthorpe, 1998; Lupton, 1995; Lupton, 1999b; Lupton & Tulloch, 1996; Neveldine, 1998; Patton, 1996; Petersen & Bunton, 1997; Petersen & Lupton, 1996; Petersen & Waddell, 1998; Singer, 1993; Tulloch & Lupton, 1997).

### **Back to Fairclough: reading media discourse**

Against this roiling sea of Aids-discourse, these choppy, multivious waves of governmental tactics, this thesis is concerned with reading media discourse about mothering risk-vulnerable children. It begins with a 'communicative event' (Fairclough, 1995a) – *Lovelines*, a textual series that impels (middle classed) South African mothers to talk to their children about sex/uality to ward off HIV/Aids and other calamities. And then, it draws parents in to talk about *Lovelines* and their parenting practices by way of exploring discourse practices of appropriated use of messaging. This is not the same thing as describing or pronouncing on real (right or wrong) parenting that happens beyond text/talk about them; it seeks instead to intermesh 'risk-proofing parenting' within textual, discursive and socio-cultural *practices* (cf. Fairclough, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1992: see Chapter 5). It is intended to generate movement between close analysis of texts and interactions about texts/parenting, and broader social analyses of contexts of production (for a particularly classed, gendered audience) and conditions of possibility for persuasion and action.

Broadly, the persuasive effects of power might be (critically) interpreted as government of mothering, families, sexuality and risk in an age of epidemic; but are not necessarily experienced as such by individual subjects (as text-consumers) themselves. Following Foucault, Fairclough (1995a) situates the notion of discourse practice as pivotally 'mediating' between discourse, social realities and individual subjects (cf. Garrett & Bell, 1998). This differs pointedly from other critical (social cognitive) approaches to media discourse, where individuals' cognitive and mental capacities 'interpret' discourse to comprehend social realities along (misguided) ideological lines (e.g. Van Dijk, 1985, 1988, 1995).



Fairclough (1995a) sees language-use (discourse generally) as a form of social practice, or 'a socially and historically situated mode of action in a dialectical [i.e. socially constructed and constitutive] relationship with other facets of the social' (p. 55). Thus, Fairclough's 'discourse practices' conceives of mass media communication – and reader-subject positioning – as 'an extended chain of communicative events', that shapes positions from the routines of production (encoding) and distribution of texts in institutional domains, to consumption of them in domestic (or other material) contexts of use (p. 41).

Texts are seen (systemically) as particular instances of language-use; as snapshots of complex dilemmas and life-worlds; as sets of options and actions – choices that may not be witting or self-conscious – that draw on particular resources available (e.g. genres, discourses, words, grammatical and rhetorical constructions). Texts function multiply as representations of particular (a) systems of knowledge, belief and (sometimes) ideology, (b) social and power relationships between people (e.g. writer-audience, expert-laity, parent-child, husband-wife), and (c) identities that could or should not be adopted (p. 17). Following Foucault, 'representations' – and not *mis*representations – are specified in terms of discourses; where a discourse is 'a type of [technical] language associated with a particular representation, from a specific [institutional] point of view, of some social practice' (p. 41). Discourses also, powerfully, encode the conditional rules for producing action, or of getting something done, e.g. a particular mother-child relationship in which sex communication is made to happen.

Media discourse – as an 'order of discourse' or particular institutional type of using and organizing language, usually to *do* or *achieve* something (e.g. to inform, entertain, persuade, appear 'objective' or 'authentic', offer in/expert opinion, competitively capture the attention of a particular audience, etc.) – has a 'heavily embedded and layered character' (Bell, cited in Fairclough, 1995a, p. 48). This usually refers to its properties and propensities for creative hybridization, notably through processes of 'inter-discursivity', drawing on a range of potentially contradictory and conflictual discourses that engage and undercut one another (p. 61), and 'inter-textuality', with fragments of other/earlier texts embedded in

later ones, re-territorializing and transforming meanings (p. 49). But, of course, the nature of discourse practice can also be 'conventional', reproducing discursive limits and reiterating normative positions of the status quo (p. 60).

Fairclough (1995a) uses this complexity of institutional situation, functionality and form of media discourse to reject the 'simple [Marxist] view' that *all* media discourse works ideologically (cf. Hall, 1980; Pecheux, 1982). This marks a (Neo- or 'Western Marxist') shift away from the sense of ideology (it, singular) as 'the abstract system of economic values that works as delusionary social cement' (Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002, p. 75); towards the splintering of ideologies (plural) embedded in everyday discursive practices and power-struggles of living. Fairclough (1995a) recycles Thompson's (Gramscian) definition of ideology as 'meaning in the service of power' to capture this implicature that runs in several ways: into a multiplicity of *competing* practices/positions; into uncertainty, risk, contradictions and the force-fields of *rhetorical persuasion*; and into negotiations of hegemony, where some meanings, practices and positions achieve (unstable and incomplete) *dominance* (Mills, 1997).

Fairclough (1995a) distinguishes between ideological dimensions of texts (as presuppositions that implicitly reproduce relations of domination between people/groups) from rhetorical or representational dimensions of persuasion, information and entertainment – although both are forms of political discourse that defy the realist idea of didactic media (simply) 'giving information' (p. 45). Thus, Fairclough puts questions about ideological functions of media discourse on the table; but tells us 'to expect answers to vary', and that 'ideology is more of an issue for some texts than for others' (p. 14). This thesis adopts this position in seeking to unpack the work of persuasion.

I offer these working definitions of concepts – texts, discourse and practices – and a general orientation towards media discourse as an initial map of the territory that follows. They are offered in the spirit that the 'map' will be re-worked repeatedly, particularly in the analytical chapters, which deploy different discourse analytical tools to unpack positioning within media discourse, viz. texts, and discoursing text-consumption. It is such an analysis of

media discourse that will anchor critical social research in a detailed understanding of how these mediated texts for mothers are socially distributed (and to which mothers), and how they become (or do not) embodied subjective and inter-subjective practice. Foucault's lenses allow us to attend to the institutional encoding of messages to facilitate preferred imperatives and/or invitations; and these meanings undoubtedly operate in the persuasive, seductive, productive service of power (and possibly ideologies).

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<sup>1</sup> The imbricated layers of *Fairlady's* audience of (positioned) subjects are repeatedly revisited in the chapters that follow, in terms of its classed, racialized and gendered injunctions; and the establishment of tiered planes of inter-subjective surveillance between experts, mothers and daughters.

<sup>2</sup> *LoveLife* is substantively p/reviewed in Chapter 4 on South African discourses of HIV/Aids risk, mass media, families and sex communication.

<sup>3</sup> This information as discourse practice – particular institutional conditions and inter-textual chains that manufactured *Lovelines* texts – was drawn from an 'institutional ethnography' chapter, excised from this thesis. It is provided here as context for textual analysis that follows.

<sup>4</sup> A small red-beaded Aids icon – the red beads suggesting 'African Aids' – appeared in a header, together with the 'Breaking the silence' title, on the editorial page four months later (*Fairlady*, 19 July 2000, p. 8); and ran in this form until the (unheralded) end of the project in 2001 (*Fairlady*, 28 February 2001, p. 5), whereupon header and icon disappear.

<sup>5</sup> Reference to Patton in this thesis refers to Cindy Patton's work (e.g. Patton, 1996); and otherness is marked so (e.g. P. Patton, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> While the colonial Other (as fetish object/subject) is figured as raced-black, as simple-minded, as 'naturally' promiscuous, aggressive and homophobic, Blackman and Walkerdine (2001) find HIV/Aids – in the context of British media representations – put into discourse around another potentially sexualized Other, 'the homosexual stereotype' (p. 170-3) (cf. Lupton, 1999a, regarding Australian media stereotypes). I continue the focus on heterosexually figured 'African AIDS', and the different discourses it implicates with regards parenting youth, in Chapter 4.

<sup>7</sup> These HIV-awareness texts are read by Wilton (1997) as singular texts, 'isolated' from wider campaigns (and discourse practices) in which they may be situated and constituted.

<sup>8</sup> The label 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (CDA) is over-determined. Fairclough's (1992, 1995b) 1<sup>st</sup> CDA model developed an analytical praxis for engaging textual, discourse and socio-cultural practice, thus combining micro-textual analysis with macro-social and materialist theorization. The 2<sup>nd</sup> CDA model applied this praxis to the operation of media discourse as a site of language use (Fairclough, 1995a, 1998). A 3<sup>rd</sup> model has moved to engage more explicitly/critically with modes of domination through discourse, and producing transformation and emancipation, in alliance with Western Marxism and critical realism (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001). In addition, the term CDA is also used (by Fairclough) as an intellectual umbrella for a motley assemblage of critical linguists, social semioticians and historical/cognitive discourse analysts, some of whom have resisted such positioning on various theoretical or methodological grounds (Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002). For exposition of the 'commonalities' uniting this CDA assemblage, see Fairclough and Wodak (1997).

<sup>9</sup> Wilbraham (1996a) examined the psychologized interstices between the appearance of women's bodies and their 'inner selves', as subjects who worked on their 'unattractive' bodies, (a) to improve their well-being and self-esteem, and (b) to overcome crises of power in relation to catching and keeping men. This was tracked through the psychologized reproduction of monogamy rules as 'good relationship practice' in advice texts (Wilbraham, 1997); and in the positioning of women with respect to relationship-vigilance, emotion-work and couple counseling (Wilbraham, 1996b). Women were further invited to become skilled sexual partners, again (a) as a form of relationship-glue, to keep men sexually satisfied, and (b) as fulfillment of their 'rights' to satisfaction of their own sexual and psychological needs (Wilbraham, 1996c). This feminine body/self is discursively over-determined, tasked with finding 'her true self' in the context of a monogamous-but-sexy relationship (with a man) cast as inoculation against *her* HIV-infection through *his* infidelity (Wilbraham, 1999a).

<sup>10</sup> McRobbie's (1991) is *one* typology of styles of reading media discourse – realist, feminist and Foucauldian – and exploring tensions between styles. Blackman and Walkerdine (2001) have used, in addition, Marxist, psychoanalytic, postmodern and post-colonial lenses to examine operations and effects of media discourse (see other readings: Inglis, 1990; Stevenson, 1995). I have used McRobbie's typology because it sustains a focus on (text-production and consumption of) particular women's magazines for a particular target audience, rather than the prodigious multi-media snippets of Blackman and Walkerdine, critically drawn from all over the place to 'illustrate' theories.

<sup>11</sup> Naidoo and Wills (2000) assemble the uses of purposive mass media programming into four media effects schools (p. 242-244), viz. (1) Direct effects schools (e.g. hypodermic syringe or aerosol splatter-spray models), where input of information causes measurable effects (as behaviour change) on a largely passive audience; (2) Two-step schools (e.g. 'diffused innovation' models), where information influences active opinion-leaders in an audience, who in turn powerfully persuade others through interpersonal interaction; (3) Uses- and-gratifications schools, where active audiences appropriate media messaging to meet their own needs, to reinforce existing health beliefs, or to resist/renege messaging that does not fit existing values or beliefs; and (4) Subjective/cultural effects schools, where media is said to constitute beliefs, values and normative action around healthy lifestyles – with the potential to entrench the status quo or to challenge stereotypes, and refashion normalities and responses.

<sup>12</sup> *Critical realism* holds to the objectivist position on realities beyond texts, but opens a space of suspicion and doubt about 'representations' of realities in/through discourse. Human action – because of the diverse contexts in which it happens – is seen as complex and capricious, and thus, scientific knowledges of it are flawed and fallible (see Bhaskar, 1986; Fairclough, 1998; Hepburn, 2003; I. Parker, 1992, 1997a, 1998, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> I return to some of these parameters as they pertain to *Fairlady* in Chapter 4. There was less direct usefulness in reviewing actual text-production procedures of 'advice-giving' in women's magazines here since the analytical chapters examining these aspects of discourse practice were cut from this thesis.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Dick, Van der Walt, Hoogendoorn and Tobias (1996) deployed the health belief model in developing a photo-novella booklet, to inform indigent patients within the South African primary health care clinic system about tuberculosis. The health belief model holds that people will weigh-up healthy behavioural changes along advocated lines to the extent that such materials address their own perceptions of the severity of illness threats, and engage with their own perceptions of the obstacles that inhibit healthy behavioural changes (Rosenstock, 1990). The photo-novella underwent three cycles of reception-research (where draft texts were discussed with groups of patients), and material adjusted to increase positive identification and usefulness before mass distribution in clinics.

<sup>15</sup> The competitive array of electronic multi-media technologies have established cyberspace as the new frontier for the construction of fragmented and momentary virtual selves (e.g. Turkle, 1995), virtual bodies (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Haraway, 1991), and the dispersion, dissolution and implosion of these simulated constructions of realities (e.g. Baudrillard, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> Post-structuralist critique appropriates political goals, but in so doing cannot avoid complicity with the discourse/truth it contests or exposes, e.g. neo-liberal capitalism (see review of such politically motivated work: Nicholson & Seidman, 1995) – in the way of recuperating problematized objects/subjects or using despised/erased terms (see I. Parker, 1992: Chapter 5). Foucault's genealogies were thus critical, politically motivated attempts to expose historical/discursive conditions of manufacture of truth, and truth effects, within neo-liberalism. Habermas' comments highlight postmodernism's epistemological and ontological vagueness. (Literary critic) Neveldine (1998) offers *postmodernism* as a broad, aesthetic realm of discourse, embroiled in contestation of the legacy of modernism: the refusal of grand narratives (anti-foundationalism) and celebration of local contexts of meaning ('being there'); and respect for polysemy, multiplicity, proliferation and difference. Against this, *post-structuralism* is posited as a philosophical/linguistic realm overseen by mostly French critique of the structuralist 'sign'; it is here, within the critical disassembly of texts (cf. Deconstruction) and statements (cf. genealogy), that the provisionality of truth – always in the service of power – is explored, since meaning/reality is 'always already elsewhere' (p. 65-8).

<sup>17</sup> Habermas' theorization is not substantively covered/used in this thesis. See reviews of his position on media discourse and 'public sphere' in Boyd-Barret (1995), Fairclough (1995a) and Stevenson (1995). See discussion of his spat with Foucault in Dews (1987), Fraser (1989), Hekman (1990), Hoy (1998), Kaplan (1988) and P. Patton (1998).

<sup>18</sup> New Public Health (of the 1980s onwards) is cast against more traditional forms of (European/Australian) public health, associated in 19<sup>th</sup> century with governing safe living environments for growing urban/industrialized populations (e.g. sanitation, clean water, crime); and by the 20<sup>th</sup> century had evolved into bio-medicalized control of communicable diseases, and epidemiological patterning of risk factors/groups that was the basis for 'health promotion' (Lupton, 1999b; Naidoo & Wills, 2000). See Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER 2

### FOUCAULT'S FAMILY-SEXUALITY-RISK APPARATUS OF GOVERNMENT

#### 1. MAP, ROUTE, TERRITORY

Chapter 1 positioned my 'readings' of *Lovelines* – the media texts, and discussions about them – as inscribed by Foucauldian discourse theory as lens, tool or spine, to explore how motherly conversations with children about sex are governmentally regulated in risk conditions of an advanced HIV/Aids epidemic. The next four chapters carve up (awkwardly, artificially, expediently) the theoretical, empirical and methodological lattice of this argumentation, as follows:

- *Chapter 2* sets out Foucault's family-sexuality-risk apparatus of government that connects (macro) functioning of healthy/safe populations, nuclear families, and (psy-complex) micro-practices of childrearing - through disciplinary power.
- *Chapter 3* examines empirical and theoretical literatures (European, American, Australian) about the pedagogization of children's sexuality (by mothers) – in colonial terms of the (western) psy-complex.
- *Chapter 4* wrestles with peculiarly *South African* discourses of youth risk, families, talking about sex, and media persuasion, in HIV/Aids epidemic.
- *Chapter 5* sets up 'Foucault's methods', and various 'Foucauldian' tactics for analyses of discourse/s and subject positioning – that (methodologically) scaffold the analysis chapters.

This chapter maps Foucault's concepts that etch the surfaces of this thesis. Easier said than done, for my arguments have raided 'moments' (italicized below) from the sprawling density, and historicized shiftiness, of Foucault's lifework, viz.

The imperative to talk openly about sex in *Lovelines* is framed in upbeat revolutionary rhetoric, as a zealous liberation from sexual repression and risky silence; and this is read

with/against Foucault's *repressive hypothesis*. Nervous mothers and hypersexual and hyper-risked adolescents appear as familial figures (or *subject positions*) around which *disciplinary power* circles; placing maternal subjectivities, youth sexualities, and the inter-subjective (pedagogical) spaces between them, under normative *surveillance* of expertise, within the *family-cell* as a discursive and spatial location. Sex-talking with children appears, in this South African context of HIV/Aids '*plague*', as a set of institutionalized disciplinary *techniques* – intended to inoculate against risks associated with (unprotected) sex - that permeate the individual body and self (as subjects), the family, and the population. Thus, the operation of *Lovelines* as health promotional media discourse, is read as a form of *bio-politics of a disciplinary society*, the disciplinary regulation of the lifestyles of healthy populations through power/knowledge; and as a tactic of '*government*', where families (and particularly childrearing or mothering) are harnessed as relay points – inscribed with individual moral obligations, duties and responsibilities - in the stabilization and management of *epidemiological risk* by the (distant) State.

This chapter alludes to conceptual nodes from (mostly) *The history of sexuality* (Foucault, 1978), *Discipline and punish* (Foucault, 1977), and Foucault's (1991a) lecture, '*On governmentality*'. Although this isolates concepts from their genealogical swerves and discontinuities of discourse/s, power and subjectivities, I have sought to hold their methods and contexts of manufacture in sight by unpacking ideas text by text, marking shifts, interstices, rhizome-extensions and weaves (see also Chapter 5) – rather than exposition of general 'Foucauldian' concepts or themes. This chapter works with Foucault's so-called 'middle' and 'later' genres, where he articulated government of populations, in neo-liberal democratic societies, through institutionalized disciplinary technologies of the self. The proliferation of commentaries on Foucault's work (e.g. Dean, 1994b; Dews, 1987; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Fraser, 1989; Howarth, 2000; Kendall & Wickham, 1999; McNay, 1994; Mills, 1997; Tamboukou, 2003), find his theoretical and methodological ideas folded into three (imbricated) epistemes, as follows:

- Early 'archaeological work' on discourse, knowledge and truth (e.g. Foucault, 1965, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1976);

- ❑ Middle 'genealogical studies' on surveillance, disciplinary power, resistance and bio-politics (e.g. Foucault, 1977, 1978, 1982, 1984a, 1984b); and
- ❑ Later 'ethical work' on agentic and responsible citizens (and selves), governed from afar (e.g. Foucault, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1991a).

The Foucauldian journey in this chapter begins then with *The history of sexuality*, to establish a plane for the family-sexuality-risk apparatus and pedagogization of children's sexuality that constitutes the central argument of this thesis. Secondly, it connects governmental and functionalist theorization about 'the nuclear family' (as macro-practices of social stability) to shifts in psychologized styles of custodial authority/interaction with children, e.g. 'child-centredness' (as micro-practices). Finally, a 'disciplinary society' of segmented family cells is fabricated through panoptic surveillance and normalization (Foucault, 1977), and neo-liberal 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1991a) - particularly as subjective/societal tactics of risk-avoidance through epidemiological science, and insurance against risk. This theory-chapter is analytical in that its conceptual signposting cuts a path through vast literatures – as dense and dangerous thickets – on families, childrearing and risk.<sup>1</sup> I am concerned less with 'reviewing' empirical literature here - but where I do, I display partiality for governmental/genealogical accounts - than with trying to find paths, positions, limits and linking lines in sectors of argumentation. The emergence of South African risk conditions, parental practices and media discourse is (purposively) held back until Chapter 4; when its ex-colonized, '3<sup>rd</sup> World' otherness, and advanced HIV/Aids epidemic, may talk back to discipline/government of 'risk' by the western psy-complex. This is in keeping with developing post-colonial critique of Foucault's governmentality (cf. Mills, 1996; Stoler, 1995).

## 2. A HISTORY OF SEXUALITY

### Foucault's repressive hypothesis

Foucault's (1978) *The history of sexuality* examined how sex became the central sign around which modern subjectivity is organized. Foucault's 'repressive hypothesis' is



articulated through the modern discourse of/on sexuality to promise (adult) speaking subjects the benefits of (a) revelations of the deepest truths about themselves through their sexuality as 'the master key'; (b) liberation through overturning globally repressive laws that have governed sex for centuries; and (c) untrammelled and rightful sexual freedom and pleasure. The 'repressive hypothesis' is thus a crucial tool for interrogating contemporary opinion that modern individuals – compared to say, 'those prudish Victorians' whose sexualities were secretively and reproductively confined to conjugality – are sexually enlightened and liberated. Foucault argues that the dynamic of modern sexual repression does not work through prohibition, concealment and silencing; but through endless confession, exhibition, observation, examination, classification – through 'multiplication of discourse' and 'incitement to discourse' (p. 105-6) - whereby sex and sexuality is made available for scrutiny and discussion, and through this normalization process, is constituted as a truthful object of knowledge.

Furthermore, *scientia sexualis* – the institutionalized scientific research practices that have systematically fabricated 'sexuality' since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. medicine, criminology, sexology, psychoanalysis, epidemiology) – has 'put sex into discourse' in ways that have constituted truthful (expert) knowledges about sex; and simultaneously scaffolded a 'will to knowledge' in individual subjects. Thus, familiar or hidden pleasures have been tracked down in scientific writings, 'abstracted' from individuals, incorporated into systems of norms and rules that appear as knowledge-structures external to, yet 'implanted within', individuals. In other words, modern individuals' knowledge and experience (of their sexuality, and therefore, of themselves) is constantly exposed as incomplete or hidden, requiring augmentation, education, vigilance and work – namely revolutionary transgression of the repressive laws and sexual silences that have restricted their potential as authentic and self-realized individuals.

For Foucault (1978), 'the statement of repression and the sermon of revolution... are mutually reinforcing' (p. 8). Hence, individuals – such as the 'embarrassed parents' that overpopulate the literatures in chapters that follow – are enjoined to solemnly confess their

sexual repression; and maintain the repressive hypothesis, through (adapted from Foucault, 1978, p. 9):

- ❑ Alleging that they are 'at fault' with how sex is conducted (secretly, guiltily) or spoken about (defensively) – and they must right this wrong;
- ❑ Making an effort to speak explicitly about sex;
- ❑ Acknowledging how hard openness and explicitness is, and how long it will take to 'undo' the negative effects of power;
- ❑ Attempting to reveal the (hidden) realities of sex;
- ❑ Affirming the positivity and 'naturalness' of sex's power and its pleasurable effects.

Foucault (1978) does not wish to show that the repressive hypothesis is mistaken, a ruse or conspiracy, or outmoded, requiring replacement with a more enlightened system. He does not claim that sex has not been prohibited or masked, or that repression is worse in modernity than previously. His object is rather to describe the regime of (elusive, proliferating, urgent) knowledge-power-pleasure that sustains modern discourses on sexuality as 'a local and tactical technology of modern power' (p. 12). The effect of the scientific statements, uncertain/ecstatic confessions and sites for the 'implantation' of sexuality (e.g. media, schools, manuals, peers, families: see below) is to produce and intensify sexuality, to constitute a 'deployment of sexuality', as follows:

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tried gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct; not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power. (p. 105-6)

### **Power as surface network of swirling forces**

As I have suggested, Foucault's writings on discourse, power and subjectivity shifted; and he apparently repeatedly asserted that he was not propounding a *theory* of power (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). In *The history of sexuality*, Foucault (1978) re-worked the nature, form and unity of 'sovereign power' espoused in liberal humanist and Marxist models. Foucault

rejected notions of power as a possession or sustained, monolithic mechanism of dominance wielded by an individual or group to subjugate, exploit, violate, limit or dupe others – although he admitted these as ‘terminal forms’ (crystallized structural effects of oppression) power might reproduce, they are not what a (genealogical) analytics of power’s micro-operations should usefully undertake (p. 92)(see Chapter 5).

Thus, Foucault’s (1978) model of power emerges firstly as radically *dispersed* through social relations: that is, exercised from innumerable points, and unstably ‘running around’ between points; coming ‘from below’ and ‘from everywhere’, rather than from the intentioned choices or decisions of (powerful) individual subjects; and swirling chainlike in dense webs of ‘force relations’ immanent in particular spheres and passing through localized sites (p. 92). This swarming dispersion alludes too to power’s operation through (a) ceaseless struggles, confrontations, collusions, resistances, confrontations, re-formations and reversals, which strengthen or weaken force relations; and (b) strategies by which they take effect – ‘by non-subjective aims and objectives, general design, State apparatus, institutional crystallization or social hegemony’ (p. 93).

A second related feature of Foucault’s (1978) model of power is that it is *productive* of conditions of possibility for particular kinds of action, statements and subjectivity - rather than *only* restricting or constraining these. For Foucault, knowledge is imbricated with power, because all knowledge is the effect of power struggles to advocate or suppress particular versions of events, objects or subjects (Foucault, 1980, 1982, 1991b). Power’s exercise, then, is conceived as knowledge-mechanisms that form ‘a grid of intelligibility of the social order’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). But, as Mills (1997) has argued, the view of power as ‘the condition of production of all knowledge’, and as ‘polar’ and ‘asymmetrically dispersed’ (rather than monolithic), produces opportunities for uses that are ‘potentially splintered’ and ‘formally open to contradiction or resistance’ (p. 20).

A third feature of Foucault’s (1978) matrices of force relations is *resistance*, conceived as a ‘counter-stroke’ exercised too from a multiplicity of points or knots of inflammation, distributed in irregular fashion at certain moments with varying densities, and always on the

'inside' of power or 'within the strategic field of power relations' (p. 96). From a genealogical perspective, Foucault does not see such resistances routinely producing massive ruptures of socio-structural transformation - 'there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions or pure law of the revolutionary' (p. 96). Instead 'necessary', 'improbable', 'spontaneous', 'solitary', 'concerted', 'violent' or 'quick to compromise' resistances produce 'mobile and transitory points' that may cleave and fracture unities and linearity, effect re-organization of discursive practices, and mobilize individuals or groups to act (or not) in definitive ways through offering differently refracted subject positions (p. 97).

A final feature of Foucault's (1978) model of power is 'bio-power' – which I link later on to the docile body/subject within a 'disciplinary society' (Foucault, 1977), and to the notion of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1991a). Bio-power is the term used by Foucault (1978) to refer to power centred on the bodies in a 'social body' as 'living beings' – that is as a disciplinary and administrative politics that 'assumed responsibility for their life processes and undertook to control and modify them' – rather than as plagued by 'the menace of death' (p. 142). Foucault posits two forms or poles of bio-power, which represent a first foray into linking micro- and macro-analytics of power (Gordon, 1991).

The first pole – evolved during the 17<sup>th</sup> century – '*an anatomo-politics of the human body*', was concerned with the body as a biological machine (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). This 'natural science' divided the body into anatomical units (e.g. brain capacity, eyesight, fertility, etc.); each was taken up separately and subjected to precise measurement and treatment/training in order to optimize its efficiency and usefulness to current social systems. The second pole – formed somewhat later – '*a bio-politics of the population*', was concerned with specifying the biological processes of the species body (e.g. birth rate, deaths, life expectancy, etc.) and the conditions that cause such processes to vary (e.g. disease, famine, war, gender, age, etc.) (p. 139). The aim here was to effect supervision of 'life and the organization of living' through interventions and regulatory controls (cf. Armstrong, 1983, 1985; Arney & Bergen, 1984; Dean, 1999).

Foucault (1978) argued that bio-power emerged as a political technology in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when population management became a central concern of the (French) State, and regulation of subjects gradually shifted from juridical power to the nascent scientific disciplines, institutions and agencies within industrialized capitalism. The two poles of bio-power were brought together through 'capitalist economic vectors' (and others) related to sex, and constitution of the 'the nuclear family'. Thus, Foucault argues that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the need to exploit a 'vital labour force' targeted reproductive conjugality and actively promoted fertility; while the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a multi-channeling of sex into micro-circuitry of the economy, with procreative sex 'discouraged' for economic reasons (p. 114).

### Foucault's family, and pedagogization of children's sexuality

As is evident above, the pivotal idea within Foucault's (1978) *The history of sexuality* is that sexuality is not a static trans-historical essence; neither is it an 'intractable drive', disobedient to a prohibitory power that constantly tries to control, channel or suppress it. Instead: 'sexuality is a rather dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population' (p. 103). Rather cheerfully in terms of resistance too, we are reminded that 'life [and sex] constantly escapes the techniques that govern, shape and administer it' (p. 143). This is conveyed in Foucault's view of the instrumentality and manoeuvrability of sex; that it has supported many strategies, politics and manifestations in different eras and sites (and continues to do so); and that power does not repress sexuality nor magically uncover its truths.

Foucault (1978) argues that since the 18<sup>th</sup> century scientific preoccupation with sex, four 'strategic unities', as specific mechanisms of power/knowledge concerned with the sexualities of women, men and children – clustered together into 'functional families' (see below) – developed over time, and became fairly autonomous. Each centred on a 'problematic figure' (cf. subject position, see Chapter 5) that served as 'privileged objects of knowledge and targets and anchorage points for the ventures of knowledge' (p. 105). These

centres and figures – and the power relations between them – constitute the premises of Foucault's argument that, by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, 'the nuclear family' had become the principal focus for and purpose of the government of sexuality. The relevance of these centres and figures (selected and adapted from Foucault, 1978, p. 104-6, below), to my constitution of maternal and adolescent-daughter risk-positions in *Lovelines*, and to imperatives for (heterosexual) pedagogization of children's sexuality, would seem obvious.<sup>2</sup> Foucault's writing pre-dates, but powerfully pre-figures, HIV/Aids risk related to (unsafe) heterosexual practices in South Africa (see Chapter 4).

- *Hystericization of women's bodies*, centred around 'The Nervous Woman', or latterly, 'The Frigid Wife' or 'The Indifferent Mother', where Foucault's analysis demonstrates that: (a) women's bodies were saturated with sexuality; (b) women were drawn into medical and/or psychiatric examination through their dysfunctional reproductive, sexual, mothering and emotional capacities; and (c) women were positioned within the *social body*, where her regulated fertility ensured survival of the labour force; the *family-cell*, where she was a functional 'nurturing' element; and the *life of children*, where she had biological-moral responsibilities for custodial care.
- *Socialization of procreative behavior*, centred around 'The Malthusian Couple', where the conjugal couple – relative to themselves as individuals/partners and to the social body as a whole – were inscribed with medical, psychological, moral and economic responsibilities in the regulation (or rejuvenation) of their fertility and procreation.
- *Pedagogization of children's sexuality*, centred around 'The Masturbating Child', where all children, as 'preliminary sexual beings on this side of sex, but within it', were constituted as prone to 'sexualized activity' (here, referring to the masturbation of boys), which was construed as 'natural', but also 'unnatural' in the sense of sex holding physical, moral and collective dangers for precocity of sexual experience/development.

Foucault (1978) found the pedagogization of children's sexuality to be concerned with 'precocious sexuality in childhood' considered a significant social problem – the 200-year war waged against masturbation - and became the object of surveillance, research, prurient voyeurism, prohibition, sublimation, punishment, and transgression. If Foucault's writing on children's sexuality in/and the family is 'telegraphic' or 'scattered', these references mark issues that were to be analyzed later in greater depth; volume 4 of Foucault's planned six volumes on the history of sexuality was to be titled *The crusade for children* (Stoler, 1995, p. 139). In this thesis, the spheres of child-protection and social concern veer towards the early ages of penetrative sexual intercourse as a risk factor in sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy in South Africa (see Chapter 4 & 6); concerns that would, ironically, welcome masturbation as a safer sexualized option for young people.

Foucault (1978) argues that the preoccupation with children's sexuality lead firstly to a re-organization of the relationships between children and their adult custodians – the parents, teachers, priests, judges, welfare administrators, doctors and psychologists who examined the conduct of children; recording, judging, commenting on, policing, training and reforming it. Later on, this was compounded by the 'affective and sexual intensification' of internal family relations through the inscription of (Freudian) psychoanalytical Oedipus/Electra Complexes onto child development and family functioning (Foucault, 1978, p. 109).

Such developments constituted a new domain of knowledge, a discourse on children's sexuality; and connected children, parents, teachers and other experts to agencies of public hygiene, with parents – mostly mothers or minders/nurses - expected to take responsibility for the surveillance, prevention or detection of transgression on a day-to-day basis in the domicile of the family-cell. Referring to communication with/about children regarding sex and sexuality, Foucault (1978, p. 29-30) finds – contrary to popular sentiment – increasing incitement, intensification, and irruption of silence:

It would be less than exact to say that the pedagogical institution has imposed a ponderous silence on the sex of children and adolescents. On the contrary, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it has multiplied the forms of discourse on the subject; it has established various points of implantation for sex; it has coded contents and

qualified speakers. Speaking about children's sex has induced educators, physicians and parents to speak of it, or to speak to them [children] about it, causing children themselves to talk about it, and enclosing them [children] in a web of discourses which sometimes address them, sometimes speak about them, or impose canonical bits of knowledge on them, or use them as a basis for constructing a science that is beyond their grasp - all this together enables us to link an intensification of the interventions of power to a multiplication of discourse.

Foucault (1978) does not reduce the fabrication of 'the nuclear family' to an industrial capitalist sign, although the seeds of such functionalism are historically entangled from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards in (French) government of (a) gradually urbanizing populations; (b) the rise of scientific disciplines and institutions, and voluntary agencies, which addressed 'social' and 'family problems'; and (c) lingering Judeo-Christian policing of conjugal sexuality and procreative marriage. Foucault (1978) argues that the relations that embed sex gave rise, 'in every society', to a '*deployment of alliance*', a juridical ordering that powerfully linked the law, economy, social welfare, religious institutions, family and sexual reproduction – specifying 'rules' regarding marriage, conjugality, kinship, patrilineal transmission of names and possessions, statuses of partners and children, and what was permitted and illicit, including incest taboo (p. 106). The rise of bio-power (see above) produced a new apparatus that connected to sex in different ways; a '*deployment of sexuality*' that extended, invented, incited, annexed, stimulated and penetrated bodies in increasingly intricate ways; and regulated populations through proliferating norms of desire/pleasure (p. 107) – and, of course, danger/risk as consequence of transgression.

Foucault (1978) finds the family-cell – in its forms and functions valued from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards – fabricated through conjunction and inter-penetration between regimes of alliance and sexuality. Thus, the elements of deployment of sexuality (viz. the hysterization of women's bodies, reproductive regulation, the specification of sexual perversions, the disciplining of children's sexuality) are ordered within the frameworks, sites and along the axes of alliance – the husband-wife axis and the parent-child axis. Thus, far from the family excluding, silencing or diminishing sexuality, Foucault (1978) finds the family's role as 'anchoring sexuality' and providing its 'permanent support', through conveying 'the economy of pleasure and the intensity of sensations' within a regime of alliance and



relational/conjugal sexuality (p. 108). Psychoanalysis construed the family-site as 'a hotbed of constant sexual incitement', in which 'incest occupies a central place' (p. 109) – constantly inflamed and declined – in ways that Foucault understood as the hegemonic force of sexualized inscription of modern subjectivity, rather than simple prohibition or repression, viz.

The guarantee the one would find the parents-child relationship at the root of everyone's sexuality made it possible – even when everything seemed to point to the reverse process – to keep the deployment of sexuality firmly coupled to the system of alliance (p. 113).

Thus, the family was not a 'private' space/source of conjugal intimacy and custodial childrearing, but a 'crystal' that refracted, diffracted and reflected apparatuses of organization from the outside in, and opened its daily operations to examination and surveillance. Foucault (1978) finds that 'by virtue of (the family's) permeability... it became one of the most valuable tactical components of the deployment of sexuality' (p. 111). Foucault's (1991a) later lecture, *On governmentality*, conceived the family as a privileged unit or cell of 'the population', which became the target of government (cf. Bell, 1995).

### 3. CONSTITUTING NUCLEAR FAMILIES: MACRO- AND MICRO-PRACTICES

#### **Mothering the population/nation**

This detailed animation of Foucault's (1978) deployments of sexuality and alliance through the family-cell – particularly related to disciplining children's sexuality – was provided because these aspects of Foucauldian theorization constitute a dominant lens/totem in this thesis. But I do not imply that his analytics represent the entire field of socially saturated definitions of what families are and do. Several authors have used micro-historical (or genealogical) methods to find 'the family' enmeshed in and invented through various practices and (often) sexualized circuits of power in different locales, e.g. in France (Aries, 1973; Donzelot, 1980), the United Kingdom (Bell, 1995; Finch, 1993; Hendrick, 1997; Mort, 1987; Parton, 1991; Popkewitz, 2003; Rose, 1985, 1987, 1990), or exported to 'the

colonies' (McClintock, 1995; Mills, 1996; Stoler, 1995). I cast governmental (genealogical) accounts of the constitution and functioning of nuclear families against those of functionalist sociologies here, particularly with regards to the emergences of (nuclear) 'family-in-crisis' constructions. The overweening (public health) agendas of child protection are then tracked back to the binding of modern (nuclear) families by moral, social and legal imperatives, to children's well being, through advocacy of (historically unstable) childrearing techniques.

In Donzelot's (1980) and Rose's (1985, 1987) governmental/genealogical studies, 'the family machine' is enmeshed within webs of public health authorities, experts and institutions; which, over 250 years, have fabricated families of self-regulating subjects, who now appear to 'willingly choose' (or 'buy into' to varying degrees) particular (functional) familial practices. Thus, Donzelot (1980) does not approach the family as a pre-given unity, but rather as a fundamentally social site of institutional and power intersections; 'a moving resultant, an uncertain form whose intelligibility can only come from studying the system of relations it maintains at socio-political level' (p. xxv). Like Foucault and Rose, he rejects functional Marxist views of the family as (simply) an institution governed by 'false consciousness' to protect capitalist State and ruling class economic interests. Donzelot's key argument concerns the historical shift in how families are 'policed', viz. from patriarchal family-government, to (State) government *through* families. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, patriarchal/fatherly authority over households was all but colonized by State apparatuses, with the family appearing 'as a relay, an obligatory or voluntary support for social imperatives' (p. 92).

Donzelot finds this permeability of the family to outside authority to be produced through two technologies of government, '*the tutelary complex*' and '*regulation of images*'. Firstly, the tutelary complex bound (primarily) poor and working class families to forms of expertise, without disabling the family mechanism through dependency on welfare, resistance to coercion, or disruption of the hegemonic notion of the family as 'a private domain'. One aspect of this expertise was a pedagogical alliance forged between (a) the distant medical/psychiatric profession, (b) 'public hygiene technicians' who operated

through philanthropic agencies and conducted home-visits, and (c) mothers (cf. Rose, 1990). These 'health visitors' offered primary education (e.g. literacy, medico-hygiene, nutrition) and life-skills counsel (e.g. family planning, sex education, marriage guidance, abstemiousness, monogamy), which mothers deployed as 'techniques' in their domestic cells. Such 'familialism' contained disparate elements of public health management, quasi-religious moralization, and popularized psychoanalytic understandings of the real/symbolic functions of parents in the lives of children; and was geared, obviously, towards halting transmission of 'dirty habits' to children, and surveillance of working class families in particular (Barrett & McIntosh, 1983).

Donzelot (1980) posits a second – and historically later – mechanism of government implicated in techniques for '*regulation of images*', whereby representations of parental conduct, mothering, childhood and family life generated by expertise were encoded to infuse and incite the personal investments and goals of individuals; to inform and regulate the ways they lived in and reflected on their own families. This confers with modern media discourse on childrearing (see Chapter 1, and below).

Rose (1985, 1987, 1990) was concerned with tracking the links between governmental discipline and the historicized institutionalization of the psy-complex. This government was especially intensive and insistent in the intermeshed sectors of children, women and families (cf. Burman, 1994). Rose (1990, p. 121) captures the pungent social anxiety around safety in the regulatory targeting of children *and* their parents, thus:

In different ways, at different times, and by many different routes varying from one section of a society to another, the health, welfare and rearing of children have been linked in thought and practice to the destiny of the nation and the responsibilities of the State. The modern child has become the focus of innumerable projects that purport to safeguard it from physical, sexual and moral danger, to ensure its 'normal' development, and to actively promote certain capacities or attributes such as intelligence, reasoning, educability and emotional stability. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, anxieties concerning children have occasioned a panoply of programmes that have tried to conserve, protect and shape children by moulding the petty details of the domestic, communicative and sexual lives of their parents. Along this maze of pathways, the child – as an idea and a target – has become inextricably connected to the aspirations of the authorities.

In Britain, Rose (1990) linked this historicized web of powers, interventions, institutions and normalizing judgements of families to formal government at three points. First, the medicalized *apparatus of public health* gathered information about the population through epidemiological surveillance, and devised interventions into 'social problems', including 'transforming the home into a site of prophylaxis' (p. 129). In other words, to strengthen the regulation of families through promotion of more rigorous socialization by parents of children, as forms of social or moral rescue. But Rose's key argument here – and a pivotal point in this thesis – is the invention of mothers (mostly) who *want* psychologically and physically healthy children according to vaunted social norms/ideals; and thus voluntarily and actively engage with the ever-shifting tasks of effecting this, as individuals. Where this failed, Rose found other institutional normalization nets appeared. Second, the *juvenile court* pioneered children's rights (to custodial protection, education, health and justice), and scrutinized, judged and reformed the 'problem families' of delinquent children. Third, the *child guidance clinic* provided 'the hub of programmatic mental hygiene for children who'd gone wrong and families who'd wronged them' (p. 129), having legal powers of access to home and school, and a powerful armoury of therapeutic techniques.

This family of genealogical accounts of regulation of families, mothering and children – Foucault's, Donzelot's, Rose's brand of 'mothering the population' – demonstrate how historical, theoretical and normative concepts are intimately and intricately connected with (a) shifting arenas of concern about (particularly classed) children, (b) proliferating powers of psy-complex (and other institutional) expertise, and (c) contingent social policy and statutory developments of child-protection (cf. Bell, 1993, 1995; Burman, 1994; Finch, 1993; J. Kitzinger, 1997; Parton, 1991; Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers, 1992). If a social economy requires 'the family' to operate effectively, then social policy cannot function outside the family – an institution set up to produce, protect, nurture and develop children as docile, productive and responsible young citizens (Wyness, 2000).

## The functional(ist) nuclear family

Functionalist (socialization) theories of the nuclear family offer a different 'level of analysis'<sup>3</sup> to such governmental/genealogical accounts – a sense of how families are conventionally 'done', and correspondingly 'come undone' when conventions slip for whatever reason (Silva & Smart, 1999). In Sociology 101 grand narratives, Steel and Kidd (2001) posit functionalist sociologies of the family as two broadly oppositional categories (or historicized eras) of structuralism. These appear as *consensus* (systems theoretical) approaches, where elements of a (nuclear family) system are designed to work harmoniously and effectively through complementary roles and cooperative tasks; and *conflict* (critical theoretical) approaches, where the concern is with power differentials between strata, ideological exploitation, and coercion of some roles/tasks to serve interests of others, e.g. Marxist and feminist theories of families within patriarchal capitalism (cf. Barrett & McIntosh, 1982).

It is useful to cursorily mention tensions between these approaches for several reasons. First, despite recent jostling and 'liberalization' among family theories and studies, (consensus) functionalist socialization theory is entrenched (still), explicitly or implicitly, within traditional developmental psychological approaches, and the model of 'vulnerable' childhood espoused by social institutions (Burman, 1994). Second, (consensus) functionalist theory of the nuclear family – through powerful nexus with psy-complex judgements – underpins much of contemporary 'moral panic' regarding family *dysfunction*. In other words, prior harmonious functionality is contemporaneously construed as breaking down, producing 'crisis' that needs urgent rescue, repair and panicky propping up (Wyness, 2000). Finally, the tensions between consensus (systems theory) and conflict ('anti-family') approaches cleave authoritative positions on sex communication between parents and children in the family/home, later on in Chapter 3.

Functionalism in the social sciences (circa 1940s to 1960s) posited social order as complementary, but functionally distinctive parts rooted in common systemic values that had 'evolved' over time, as the basis of social cohesion and equilibrium (Steel & Kidd, 2001). This referred to a process of gradual structural differentiation whereby the family-unit

(as a system) 'adapted to the needs of an industrial society and capitalist economy' (Ziehl, 1997, p. 51). Ziehl (2003) notes that the (American) sociological functional-family theories were written against post-World War 2 tropes of 'the-family-in-crisis'. Thus, during a time of rapid social reconstruction, theories wove idealized (or ideological) and empirical norms together to powerfully fabricate the agentic, adaptive and beneficent capacities of family systems; and the positive role of families in smooth social functioning. This speaks to the role of social scientific research, and the psy-complex, within a governmental matrix; it will be conjured often – as a mantra, as a battle cry - in the chapters that follows.

Murdock's and Parsons' studies are absent traces in traditional developmental psychology textbooks, underlaying mother-child attachment (Burman, 1994). Murdock (1949) – through normative survey of families in 250 societies – claimed that families fulfill four universally basic functions. These being: *sexual access* of the monogamous and procreative variety; *reproduction* of new citizens, and custodial care of children in stable domestic arrangements; *economic provision* of labour, shelter, food; and *socialization* of offspring, with language, culture, values, skills. Parsons (1956) identified this family-template as 'the isolated nuclear family' or 'the conjugal family', distinguished from earlier forms through loosening of wider kinship ties to render it a smaller, mobile unit within industrial society; and increased (gendered) role specialization, where breadwinning husbands worked in factories, and unpaid wives worked at nurturing in the home (cf. Ziehl, 2003). The socialization of children was construed as nuclear parents' central preoccupation; the reason and reward for their labour and construction of a 'loving home' as 'a haven in a heartless world' (Lasch, 1977).

This is the sociological concept of the 'child-centredness' of nuclear families in capitalist societies – as a set of economic/material pre-conditions, and a formal/nuclear domicile site, for psy-complex formulations of particular childrearing techniques below (e.g. Burman, 1994; Parton, 1991; Popkewitz, 2003; Rose, 1990; Urwin, 1985; Urwin & Sharland, 1992; Walkerdine, 1984, 1986; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). With regard to formulating the 'obligations' of nuclear parents towards such child-centredness, Archard (1993) finds

intricately intertwined philosophical, juridical, psychological and economic 'children's rights' to custodial protection (pp. 52, my adaptations and emphases), viz.

1. The capitalist State devolves responsibility for children to the (avowedly) '*private sphere*' of the family, where parents' proximal bonds with individual children determine parental knowledge of their 'best interests'.
2. Biological reproduction of children accords parents *powers/rights (of ownership)* over them, and their physical and psychological development. This draws on models of children as 'vulnerable' and 'incompetent'; therefore needful of adult protection, guidance and socialization.
3. Parents are *morally obliged* to inscribe 'discipline' in/onto children, to train them as productive citizens. Thus, certain – publicly defined - social, political, legal and psychological expectations and duties structure childrearing.
4. Parents are *held accountable*, and institutionally blamed and shamed for individual consequences and social problems that occur when parenting is inadequate, e.g. delinquency, poor scholarly achievement, HIV-infection through sexual ignorance, etc.

### The nuclear family-in-crisis

A 'Big Bang' in functionalist sociological theories of the family occurred (circa 1960s-1970s) with the revolutionary ideology-critique of the conflict-structuralists – exposing the 'myths' and 'misrepresentations' of the nuclear family-ideal as a harmonious family-system based on dovetailing gendered roles in 'public' versus 'private' spheres (Aulette, 1994). *Marxist critiques* tackled social institutions – like the family, mass media, religion and education – as State apparatuses that supported ruling class interests through ideology, which construed the status quo as natural, normal and desirable (Steel & Kidd, 2001). Thus, the nuclear family appeared as a strategic and emotionally manipulative social invention (as 'haven', above) that facilitated the tightening grip of industrialized capitalism; and with which workers as parents colluded (Zaretsky, 1976).<sup>4</sup> *Radical psychiatry* posited this 'nuclear haven' as a site of violent jostling for power (between conjugal partners, between parents and children) as needs for autonomy, and equality, were extinguished (Laing, 1971). Laing blamed such

'normal' nuclear and enmeshed family relationships<sup>5</sup> for (personally) disturbed and (socially) disruptive behaviour that reproduced the 'therapeutic-industry' (cf. Rose, 1990).

*Feminist critics* found the gendered division of labour in the nuclear family to subjugate women's interests to men's within an ideological complex of heterosexist patriarchal capitalism. Barrett and McIntosh (1982) develop an analogy of oppression of the home as prison – in startling (unintended?) images of Foucault's panoptic surveillance – with the housewife/mother 'working for long hours, banged up in a solitary cell, while her guards attend to other more important business' (p. 58). Feminist critiques of the family have produced a steady stream of concrete, lived-experiential accounts of the (oppressive) micro-practices of feminized labour in the domestic-cell, from housework, to childrearing, relationship-maintenance and 'receiving' expertise (e.g. Alldred, 1996a; Ehrenreich & English, 1979; Wetherell, 1995a; Wilbraham, 1996b, 1997, 2004a, 2005). Such mental, emotional and physical 'housekeeping', might be similarly inscribed on wives/mothers who are gainfully employed in the public sector, despite recently vaunted emergences of so-called 'new fathers' (Burman, 1994; Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). I return to childrearing practices below, and (feminized) talking about sex with children in Chapter 3.

Thus, consensus (systemic) and conflict (critical) approaches focus on nuclear family forms serving socio-structural or macro-systemic functions; that is, to (rightly or wrongly) reproduce social order, crystallize skewed power relationships, and stabilize social cohesion, through socialization. The definition of this (idealized or demonized or threatened) nuclear family was a heterosexual conjugal unit, based on marriage, co-habitation and reproduction; whose primary function was to inculcate 'right and proper' values in children, and remain autonomous of State/welfare support (Silva & Smart, 1999). But there is currently no such consensus about what a family is/does, or ought to be/do. A second 'Bang' in family studies (genealogically) happened during the 1990s, when it was claimed that the 'socially constructed unity' of the nuclear family had lost its objective referent (Morgan, 1999).

Morgan (1999) found this to be implicated in several forces: (a) proliferation of sexual, intimate, familial, domestic, child-custodial and childrearing arrangements; (b) State



health/welfare policy struggling with onerous risk management in unruly populations [due to (a)]; and (c) destabilized epistemological and methodological frameworks for researching and interpreting families' forms and functions, that shifted towards localized lived experience, and fluid and diverse, everyday familial micro-practices in late modernity.

As several (brave) writers on the modern family have ventured, there is no ideologically neutral ground in academic or applied debates about the status or function of the family; all discourses advocate particular moral-political positions (e.g. Chambers, 2001; Silva & Smart, 1999). For example, Ziehl (2003) wryly comments that functionalists may argue 'the nuclear family is falling apart and this is bad!'; while feminists argue 'the nuclear family is working fine and this is bad!' From the 1990s-Bang, two rival positions on changes to modern 'functional' families have emerged, namely a '*diversity*' position and a '*crisis*' position (cf. Wyness, 2000).

The postmodern *diversity position* claims diversity of form, practice, and functioning - rather than uniformity and conformity - to be the universal feature of the contemporary family (e.g. Aulette, 1994; Muncie, Wetherell, Dallos & Cochrane, 1995; Zinn & Eitzen, 1990). Morgan (1999) argues that there is no such thing as '*the family*' (an ideal, the norm), only '*real families*' (plural) and 'familial practices' (fragmented, localized). This has adaptively developed through massive and rapid social changes (e.g. greater acceptance of 'alternative' lifestyles, the social economy of late capitalism, etc.), and positive value of difference, plurality and change (e.g. Bernades, 1997; Stacey, 1990). Such an approach finds diversity of forms/functions of families in populations; and acknowledges that any individual will experience/perform a diverse range of familial practices during their lifetimes. A postmodern celebration of diversity is not akin to Foucault's post-structuralist position (see Chapter 1 & 5 for definitions of 'postmodernism' and 'post-structuralism'). I return to the issue of diversity and relativism with respect to South African families in Chapter 4.

The 'family-in-crisis' position is not new. For example, the surveillance of indigent 'problem families' during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Donzelot, 1980; Rose, 1990); a 'family-

crisis' in post-war America that required ideological bolstering of the family through Parsons' functional sociology (Ziehl, 2003); or in post-war Europe, the re-domestication of women into the 'private sphere' as housewives and mothers (Carter, 1988; Urwin & Sharland, 1992). Such 'crises' mobilized construction and reconstructions of the modern, nuclear family along functional/systemic lines. Chambers (2001) has found surging representations (post 1990) – in social scientific literature, welfare policy, political rhetoric, and media – of a so-called 'crisis' of the nuclear family. This is different to the 'diversity' position in the sense that the changes to family forms and functions are characterized as threatening and negative, as dangerously 'dysfunctional', and as requiring desperate rehabilitative reactions to ward off disaster as the very fabric of society tears asunder (Morgan, 1999).

Thus, the 'nuclear-family-crisis' seems inevitably attached to other contemporaneous crises associated with rapid social changes, de-traditionalization, uncertainty and risk, e.g. 'masculinity crisis' due to apparently uppity women, shifting models of childhood and childrearing, 'crisis' in sexual relationships as a result of newer imperatives of equity, intimacy and HIV/Aids, etc. (e.g. Clare, 2000; Giddens, 1991, 1992; Wyness, 2000). The 'family crisis' also seems reducible to concern about children. In other words, (a) spiraling disruptions to nuclear-functioning of families is repeatedly correlated with (b) negative effects on children, *and* consequent social problems, for which parents are held responsible (e.g. Alldred, 1996b; Burman, 1994; Muncie & Sapsford, 1995; Parton, 1991; Wyness, 2000). These vectors/correlations are well rehearsed and apparently empirically evidenced; and with respect to motherly conversations with children about sex, they congeal as follows. Limited maternal presence in the home - as authoritative supervisor, emotional nurturer, committed communicator – (causally) produces in children, higher risks of poor self-esteem, alcohol and drug use, early sexual activation, unwanted teenage pregnancy, and HIV-exposure (Moore, Rosenthal & Mitchell, 1996: see Chapters 3 & 4).

## Foucauldian responses to 'crisis'

I recursively return to this emblematic (epidemiological, psy-complex) 'family-crisis' position in the chapters that follow, because its tenets inscribe different kinds of public health responses to HIV/Aids risk-safety of young people; for example, (a) as 'moral regeneration of society through the family' (cf. 'New Right' family activism in Britain: Burman, 1994; Chambers, 2001; Steel & Kidd, 2001); and (b) as epidemiological 'scare tactics' about pervasive risk that drive maternal docility (see Chapters 4 & 6). It is worth mentioning several critical responses to 'family-crisis' here, from varying Foucauldian positions.

Wyness (2000), a British educationist, responds in terms of children's rights – locally and globally, over, around and in conjunction with the rights of parents – to integration into political structures and policies, that grant them citizenship *and* protection as active social agents in their own development. Thus, 'family crisis' calls forth new categories of 'children' and 'parents' as subjects, who renegotiate their custodial relationships in different ways.

Chambers (2001), a British cultural and media studies academic, finds an unhealthy collusion of representations of 'modern family crisis' between (academic) social scientific research, (statutory) welfare policy, political rhetoric and popular media discourse. This produces (at least) two effects, she argues. First, it generates a 'moral panic' that justifies - or creates the conditions of possibility for - more rigorous statutory intervention into or normalizing surveillance of families to resolve the crisis (e.g. mothers should stay at home with young children, or be available to 'monitor' adolescents' after-school doings). Second, it nostalgically harks back to a mythical time when families were 'happily functional' (rather than haplessly dysfunctional), and constantly re-invents the nuclear family ideal. I return to these ideas in Chapter 9.

Finally, Rose (1990), British genealogist of the psy-complex, finds the notion of 'family crisis' in constitutive relations with the proliferating experts, authorities and agencies that hover around 'the family machine'. Crises, as 'dangerous nodes of pathological possibilities'

for antisocial behavior, personal destructiveness and failures of coping, are psychologically rephrased as 'points of manifestation of healing potentials hidden within each normal person' (p. 245). Thus, crises are dangerous nodes and '*therapeutic opportunities*' (p. 245, my emphasis) – in the ambivalent (Foucauldian) senses of possibilities for (a) personal growth, recharged self-esteem, insight into and taking charge of familial relationship 'problems', freer lines of communication; and for (b) further intervention by authorities/experts, the installment of techniques of normalized practice to reveal/repair what is 'hidden within', and the entrenchment of permeability of families as a tactic of government.

Thus, Rose finds this institutionalized government of a never-ending series of 'crises' (apparently reaching right back into the 18<sup>th</sup> century) has actively shaped families – through historicized childrearing, relationship and risk-safety information and techniques that 'educate consent' (cf. Gramsci, 1971) – in different ways at different times. Such government preferentially operates in modernity on a preventative basis, anticipating and avoiding risk of derailment, rather than a curative basis, fixing aftermath-wreckage.

### **Learning to mother: childrearing advice for moms**

And so, 'healthy' childrearing practices must be mobilized to ward off risk of wreckage. As I suggested in Chapter 1, there is a huge (largely feminist and/or Foucauldian, and mostly British) body of analytical literature on the historicized interfaces between 'the cult of child psychology' and 'mothercraft' – transmitted to mothers through their own mothers and upbringing, health visitors, medical/pediatric consultations, ante-natal classes, parenting manuals, children's health promotional campaigns, women's magazines, television programming, etc. (e.g. Alldred, 1996a; Burman, 1991a, 1994; Carlson & Crase, 1983; Carter, 1988; Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Ehrenreich & English, 1979; Hardyment, 1983; Kaplan, 1992; Marshall, 1991; Newson & Newson, 1974; Parton, 1991; Phoenix & Woollett, 1991; Popkewitz, 2003; Riley, 1983; Rose, 1985, 1990; Singer, 1992; Urwin, 1985; Urwin & Sharland, 1992; Walkerdine, 1986; Woollett & Phoenix, 1991).

This literature has tackled the construction of maternal subjectivity through (shifting) developmental psychological knowledges about children; and how this positions mothers 'at home' in the Malthusian, heterosexual, nuclear family-cell, as objects/subjects of surveillance and regulation – as well as permeating institutional practices of welfare, health and law (Alldred, 1996b). Thus, Burman (1994) has argued that such normalizing surveillance of mothers/families is justified through recourse to seemingly contradictory discourses on responsibilities towards children: (a) an individualizing discourse, a '*developmental myth*', that assumes a directly causal relationship between mothering practices and their 'effects' on the qualities and capacities of the individual child; and (b) a public health discourse regarding '*the social ownership of children*', e.g. figuring children as '*our future*', '*our community's health*'. Burman finds these discourses mutually reinforcing as they refer to and out-manoeuvre one another in blame of individual women for 'bad' mothering, in passing the buck for financial obligations or service provision, or in debates between schools- or home-based sexuality awareness curricula (see Chapter 3).

The value of the 'genealogical' approach taken in many of the above writings – which unpack historical 'slices' of variable sizes - is that different discourses of childrearing move in and out of focus (or fashion), discontinuously. These discourses follow the pattern of the so-called 'Big-Three' historicized cornerstones of developmental psychology – *behaviorism*, *cognitive developmentalism* and *psychoanalysis* – represented in traditional textbooks (e.g. Berk, 2003); but extend understanding in two ways. First, analysis of expert advice to mothers demonstrates how discourses about childhood are attached to particular childrearing techniques that always already implicate maternal subjective practice within nuclear family arrangements and functioning.

Second, the advocacy of such expert techniques is indexical to the historical conditions of their possibility and manufacture (mostly Britain); and often is palliative after social upheaval, e.g. post-war. This is not to say that expert parenting-advice, or parenting practice per se, would be *radically* dissimilar in other contexts. In South Africa, for example, 'more traditional' (Euro-American) developmental psychological discourses are imbricated within a matrix of 'other' discourses and local realities, and the potent interconnections between

these might produce differences, and resistances (Wilbraham, 2005; see Chapter 4). For this reason, I will not review specificities of the above studies; instead I briefly mention three key moments in shifting theoretical trends (on child development) and institutionalized techniques (on mothering). As in Foucauldian genealogy, these 'shifts' do not indicate ruptures, revolutions or disjuncture; newer knowledges and practices are overlaid onto, and resist, the old; and so precise, linear 'dates' of origin are of less concern. These trends and techniques are picked up as they inscribe the literature on sex communication with children and youth – as/within particular kinds of childrearing practices – in the next chapter.

Donzelot's (1980) 'tutelary complex' of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (above) had already introduced an ethos of *medico-moral-hygienism* into the family. This discourse prioritized the physical health of children (e.g. weight, nutrition, growth-rate), and the 'cleanliness' of their domestic environments – and implicated 'moral cleanliness' of mothers (e.g. abstemiousness, monogamy, industriousness). A first shift was concerned with the gradual displacement of medical expertise on physical care of children, with psychological expertise – most notably, initially, shifts towards '*behaviourist*' or '*environmentalist*' psychological discourses (Hardyment, 1983; Newson & Newson, 1974; Urwin & Sharland, 1992). Parenting practices advocated here involved strict regimentation of children's routines, and parent-centred 'control' of learning and experience (Woollett & Phoenix, 1991). This passive model of childhood – the incompetent child who needed to be socialized by competent adults – was a characteristic figure in the functioning of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century nuclear family.

Urwin and Sharland (1992, p. 183) contrast this childhood/childrearing with the emergence of a '*maturational*' or '*developmentalist*' discourse, where the child was reconstituted as an organism whose systematic and incremental maturational and developmental processes were triggered 'from within', in interaction with its environment (cf. Arnold Gesell, cited in Rose, 1990). This represented a second major discursive shift in childrearing and pedagogical practice.

## Child-centredness and sensitive parenting

Walkerdine (1984) finds these 'maturational' ideas as foundations in the constitution of Piaget's influential '*cognitive developmental*' discourse, premised on principles of constructivism. In other words, the developing child actively discovers or constructs their own knowledge about their world through their activity in/on it, and interaction with it. This cognitive construction (obviously) works more effectively if the life-world children inhabit is stimulating, and is cohabited by engaging, responsive and supportive adults, who (a) constantly offer opportunities for thinking, talking and taking the child's perspectives into account, and (b) are 'sensitive' to the learning pace and competence of the child (Walkerdine, 1984). Walkerdine (1984, 1986) examines this pedagogical and parenting technique of '*child-centredness*' – a technique that aims to 'liberate' children - in the context of mastering mathematics in school- and home-based activities with teachers and mothers; and elsewhere, how child-centredness technology has permeated how mothers 'play' with their young children (cf. Urwin, 1985; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

Thus, the minutiae of everyday interactions with children in the home (e.g. shared task-based activities like housework/cooking, constant questioning about recall and understanding, counting objects, handling money, word play, etc.) are permeated with tactics to provoke thought, promote 'self-innovation', incite language, extend understanding, stimulate creativity, defeat boredom – and so to maximize intellectual capacity, intelligence and autonomized rationality (see Chapter 7: 'teaching moments' for sex).

Woollett and Phoenix (1991) argue that child-centredness – also labeled 'sensitive' or 'responsive' parenting – is a highly orchestrated and regulated exchange, although is made to appear spontaneous, democratic and 'child-centred', where the mother works hard to attune herself to her child's 'cues'. Such attunement requires proximal knowledge of the child through immersion in their daily activities. The psy-complex promises beneficence of this work other than simply cognitive development. It provides feedback on children's opinions; it encourages children to use adults as a resource; it imparts conversational skills

and vocabularies; and it 'reinforces children's sense of themselves as worthy people who may legitimately demand and reasonably be the centre of attention' (Woollett & Phoenix, 1991, p. 35).

Walkerdine and Lucey's (1989) exploration of mother-daughter communication and socialization follows these lines (see Chapter 1), critically demonstrating the difficulties of instituting or sustaining 'sensitive' parenting styles with older children where 'compliance' is required, e.g. negotiations around boyfriends, sex, drugs, smoking, curfews, etc.<sup>6</sup> Walkerdine and Lucey find child-centredness time- and energy-consuming, with mothers expected to sacrifice their own interests, needs and work to interact with children, and to make use of available resources, in particular ways. This childrearing practice is also deeply classed: working class mothers are more likely to separate household work and educative play, to insist on children playing 'by themselves', and to deploy authoritarian power to enforce discipline (Wetherell, 1995a).

Rose (1990) contends that the surveillance and nurturance of children's minds and emotions – through techniques of child-centredness – was entrenched and extended through the influence of *psychoanalysis* in post-war Britain (circa 1950s). This was the third shift in reconstituting childrearing practices; although the historicized inflections of psychoanalytic discourses inscribed on the family were by no means unitary (Wetherell, 1995b). Psychoanalysis inscribed the importance of parental understanding of 'the child's perspective' – most notably that (a) children's emotional (and sexual) development was intricate, conflicted, difficult and fragile as it progressed along a (universally) mapped route; and (b) children were active objects/subjects 'in a world of relationships' (Alldred, 1996a, p. 135). As Urwin and Sharland (1992) argue, the fabrication of the vehemently ambivalent, relational and libidinal nature of children's emotional development inextricably bound them to (un/healthy, in/secure) attachment to 'sensitive' mothers, who constituted their 'environment' and became responsible for their physical, emotional, sexual, moral and cognitive well being (cf. Burman, 1994; Rose, 1990).



It is thus within this discursive site – this ‘tiny, sexually saturated, familial space’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 47) – and with these childrearing knowledges and techniques (particularly, child-centredness), that pedagogization of children’s sexuality is willed to occur.

#### 4. DISCIPLINE AND GOVERNMENT

##### Foucault’s disciplinary gaze

Chapter 3 examines normative micro-practices of parent-child conversations about sex and sexuality in the family-cell, purveyed by the western psy-complex, as technologies for the implantation of sex/risk into young subjectivities. This implantation, as per psychoanalytic injunction, sticks and stutters with anxiety and embarrassment. Despite or because of this stickiness – what Foucault would call a ‘site of exhibition’ of power – such parental pedagogization is impelled to relentlessly recur as young (sexual) bodies are ‘trained’ (disciplined) to responsibly manage their own desiring/pleasurable experience, and to protect themselves, and by extension, *populations* of sexual partners, from sexualized risk (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998). In this last section of this chapter, these ideas are formally mapped onto Foucault’s conceptualizations of firstly, the fabrication of individual and collectives of subjects through disciplinary power, panoptic surveillance and normalization (Foucault, 1977); and secondly, the governing of parents/families as a strategy in the government of risk – within an apparatus of security, here working through eager rhizomes of media – in neo-liberal societies (Foucault, 1991a). This section picks up and extends Foucault’s (1978) conceptualization of the family-sexuality-risk apparatus from the outset of this chapter.

Foucault’s (1977) *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, a genealogy of the modern penal system, was concerned with how changing power relations – from sovereign to disciplinary – inscribed institutional and societal sites of punishment and discipline. This was also ‘a genealogy of the modern soul’ in that the human individual was found to be fabricated through techniques of disciplinary power, endowed with ‘interiority’ – personality, psyche, sexuality, aspiration towards betterment, conscience, guilt, remorse –

that could be worked on as agents, as instruments, as loci for broader population-management purposes (Hindess, 1996). Deleuze's (1988) incisive reading of Foucault's project on subjectivity is one which 'folds back' exterior relations of power to create an 'interiority' that is enabled to act on itself (p. 99-102).

The conditions of possibility for *Discipline and punish* are frequently configured as Foucault's political activism around prison reform during the 1970s (Gordon, 1991; Hindess, 1996).<sup>7</sup> The conditions also constitute a 'middle period' of (anti-Marxist) concern with 'disciplines' – genealogies of emergences of 'the clinical gaze' (Foucault, 1976); psychoanalysis, *scientia sexualis* and public health (Foucault, 1978); criminology (Foucault, 1977) – that forged modern subjectivities (e.g. Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; McNay, 1994; Stoler, 1995).

*Discipline and punish* begins with the spectacular dismemberment of a man accused of killing a French king (circa 1757), juxtaposed with the monotonous, meticulously regimented daily routine of a Parisian prison a century later. This genealogical swerve from public display of sovereign force and right to rule through capital punishment, to institutionally contained cultivation of 'docile bodies' was not simply seen by Foucault (1977) as enlightened, progressive juridical and penal reform; but rather as responsive to the need to reliably and efficiently regulate a growing number of transgressors in industrialized populations. This 'carceral system' – the relation of 'the prison' to knowledge and society that embeds it – drew on several interconnected reorganizations of power to punish/discipline bodies (cf. Nettleton, 1992).

Firstly, incarcerated bodies/minds offered surfaces for the development of normative disciplinary knowledges, and refinement of expertise, related to criminology. Thus, disciplinary power fabricated 'criminals' and 'delinquents' and the technical means to control, regulate and (probably not) reform them; for the system depended on its partial failure to constantly renew its normalizing interventions. I will link this idea to the *partial* effects of didactic media discourse in later analytical chapters. Secondly, the disciplinary gaze that observed, examined, documented, calibrated and judged prisoners was effected

through spatialization – ‘the distribution of individuals in space and time’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 141) – whereby individuals’ activities were meticulously timetabled, scheduled, routinized, drilled, trained and functionally located.

Foucault (1977) discussed two configurations of disciplinary power – operating within ‘blockaded institutions’ (prisons, schools, hospitals, asylums), and heuristically, swarming out into amplification within wider ‘disciplinary societies’ via ‘panopticism’. Both were spatially imagined along the lines of Bentham’s Panopticon. This architectural blueprint of a prison – with its periphery-ring of separated, backlit cells arranged around a central watchtower – ‘reverse(d) the principle of the dark dungeon’ through installing ‘permanent visibility’, and an implied power/gaze that was ‘unverifiable’ (p. 200-2). As a machine of surveillance by norms, and without reliance on any external instrument of control save the architectural possibility of ‘being seen’ (McNay, 1994), this panoptic schema produced (voluntary) individualizing observation, classification and normalization of minutiae of everyday micro-practices, and was effective through ‘its preventative character’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 206). In other words, this technology installed an (self) examining gaze – intensely penetrating and reflexive – that rendered ‘individuality’ thinkable and enabled certain kinds of disciplined and accountable actions to be beneficently coupled to certain kinds of productivities, uses and effects (Rose, 1990). ‘Docile bodies’, so subjected, regulated themselves.

### **Disciplinary society as multi-segmentary machine**

Foucault (1977) envisaged discipline as a form of power that provided techniques – through knowledges and understanding of bodies/minds - for training ‘docility’ at individual and collective levels. Thus, categories of bodies were subjected to specific operations; and each body formed as if it were part of a ‘multi-segmentary machine’ or population (p. 164). However, Foucault referred to disciplinary power as ‘a modest, suspicious power’, involving ‘humble modalities’ and ‘minor procedures’ that operated through ‘secret invasion’ (p. 170). Thus, this ‘cellular machinery’ was not mechanically effective due to these unstable, heterogeneous, reversible, microphysics of power – shifting uneasily within relationships

and sites where actions, reactions, resistances, evasions and transgressions seeped in/out of proliferating policing through manoeuvrable details (Hindess, 1996). This could be seen in my formulation (in the above section) of families as 'cellular segments' within this disciplinary optic; and it is certainly so in Foucault's (1977) hypothetical formulation of 'plague'.

Foucault had in mind here 'the haunting memory of contagions' – typhoid, syphilis, tuberculosis, polio, and eerily prefiguring HIV/Aids - and various 'social disorders' of rebellion, vagabondage, desertions, famine, etc. (p. 197-8). 'Plague' provided the conditions of possibility then for the swarming disciplinary mechanisms that were set up to protect a whole population at risk, through 'docile' individual actions and responsibilities. He argued that the programmatic panoptic organization of a 'disciplinary society' – along the new lines of a public health movement that educated the healthy to prevent disease, rather than incarcerated, exiled or cured the diseased – ideally featured at least four distributive prerequisites to secure surveillance of hygienic lifestyle imperatives (p. 141-146), as follows. I have adapted these to inscribe disciplinary tactics of talking about sex with children in families (see Chapters 6 & 7):

- *Enclosure* of certain categories of people into 'the protected place(s) of disciplinary monotony' (e.g. children enclosed in the functional sites of classed schools and family-homes);
- *Partitioning* of individuals into designated, distributed cellular segments (e.g. nuclear families, risk groups) to break up collectives; these are 'analytical spaces' to observe, monitor, record, assess and measure occupants' conduct – the aims being 'knowing, mastering and using';
- *Functional sites* refer to historically, administratively or politically encoded 'useful spaces' where particular activities are made to happen (e.g. places in the family home where sex, or talking about sex with children, occur);
- *Ranking* of individuals, who are hierarchically classified, and placed 'in a network of relations' with others (e.g. experts, parents, children, HIV+ persons).

Foucault (1977) postulated three 'simple instruments' by which disciplinary power works, viz. (1) *hierarchical observation* as the ineluctable, scrutinizing gaze of expertise, (2) *normalizing judgement* as assessment and correction of those who deviate from norms and (3) *examination* as a site that combined the clinical gaze and correction. These processes bound 'discipline' to objective knowledge of individuals and populations (e.g. through psychocomplex or epidemiological sciences). Rose (1998) finds these 'sciences' pivotal in the matrices of disciplinary power in which 'the individual' is fabricated and enmeshed. This occurs, Rose argues, through several procedures that establish a 'regime of visibility' and a 'grid of codeability', that 'fix' how individuals are perceived into an ordered spaces of knowledge about group norms (p. 187). Such norms produce (theoretical) explanations and (authoritative) strategies for calibration of good conduct, and for intervention and normalization. The procedures, levels, transfer points and (governmental) effects of normalizing judgements and 'technologies of the self' are captured below.

### On governmentality

From the late 1970s to 1984, Foucault's annual lecture series at the College de France concerned the genealogy of modern government. Some of these lectures were un/published or resurfaced in subsequent works (sometimes in competing translations), were talked about in (seemingly contradictory) interviews, and straddled swerves in Foucault's thinking and political activities (Lemke, 2001). Unsurprisingly, this sprawling, inter-textual work has generated huge amounts of writing, as expository, cartographical literatures. These literatures circle around two main deployments. Firstly, writing on 'governmentality' itself. This is overlaid with the imposing philosophical, ideological and institutional signposting of political theory, economics and hardcore Statecraft (e.g. Dean, 1999; Gordon, 1991; Hindess, 1996; Lemke, 2001; McNay, 1994; O'Malley, 1999, 2000a; Rose, 1993, 1996; Rose & Miller, 1992) – which also serves to analyze and criticize contemporary (late capitalist) neo-liberal practices and the (entrepreneurial) subjectivity it has spawned (Lemke, 2000).

A second deployment involves genealogical applications to intricate territories of governmental social policies, such as child custody and families (e.g. Burchell, 1981; Donzelot, 1980; Parton, 1991); incest (Bell, 1993, 1995); welfare (Hewitt, 1991); the psy-complex (Rose, 1985, 1990, 1998); sex education (Mort, 1987); the 'self-esteem' movements (Cruikshank, 1996); teenage pregnancy (Macleod, 1999); HIV/Aids campaigning (Patton, 1996); New Public Health (Lupton, 1995; Petersen & Lupton, 1996; Petersen & Bunton, 1997); or the notion of 'risk' in general (e.g. Castel, 1991; Dean, 1997; Ewald, 1991; Lupton, 1999b, 1999c).

My deployment of government in this thesis does not examine neo-liberal social policy around parenting, sex education or HIV/Aids – in historical or contemporary frame. It offers commentary on the minutiae of governmental interactions between social institutions – expertise, science, media, the family – and maternal and youthful subjects; and seeks to conceptually ground three aspects linking the government of risk of HIV/Aids, as an apparatus of social security and power, to modes of inter/subjectification. These concepts haunt following chapters:

1. The *proliferation* of authoritative strategies and agencies for 'the conduct of [safer sexual] conduct' that are not simply reducible to a univocal State authority;
2. The *responsibilization* of the prophylactic family, as in mothering-the-nation, to inoculate children against risk; and
3. The *privatization* of risk-management through discipline, docility and techniques of the autonomous self.

Gordon (1991) explains that 'governmental rationality' – or Foucault's neologism, 'governmentality' – has (at various times) narrower and broader meanings that theorized the close links between forms of power and processes of subjectification. (1) In general, government was concerned with '*la conduit de la conduit*' ('the conduct of conduct'), involving more or less regulated/reflective activity to train, guide or mould the actions of the self and others. (2) These managerial, relational activities took place simultaneously in different forms and sites as transfer points – for example, self-to-self relations, interpersonal relationships involving custodial care or control, communication between institutions and

communities/groups, and relations of all of these with statutory policies and practices. (3) In a political domain, the 'art of government' cohered around 'rationalities' as 'thinkable and practicable strategies' of how to govern populations of subjects without being directly responsible for them (p. 2-3).

Thus, Foucault (1991a) – this from a re-translated key lecture originally delivered in 1978 – finds the emergence of a set of problems related to security-population-government, rooted in the rapid social transformations of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (in Europe). This involved the collapse of feudalism, which spawned administrative and territorialized State centralization; and the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, which spawned religious dispersion and dissidence (p. 87-8). Foucault tracked the 'problematic of government' through several historicized regimes of power, connected through their tendency towards political sovereignty that governed 'all and each'. In other words, they were concerned with 'totalizing', disciplining populations as a whole, through norms; as well as 'individualizing', objectifying and subjecting individuals through attaching identity, accountability, utility, rationality, ethics or interiority to them (Gordon, 1991, p. 3). Foucault wished, through this genealogy of government, to move his analytics of power beyond (simply) government by violence, consensus, legitimization or discipline; towards a weave between technologies of domination (as constraint) and productive technologies of self-creation (Foucault, 1988; Hook, 2004a; Lemke, 2000).

These regimes are intricately reviewed by other scholars, and I will only crudely caricature them here as different apparatuses of governmental security to neo-liberalism (see Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1991a; Gordon, 1991; Hindess, 1996; McNay, 1994):

- *Juridical sovereignty*, as monarchical rule, by manipulation of force or decree, over territory and subjects;
- *Pastoral power*, with a leader figured as a shepherd, who gathered and watched over a flock, and guided their individualized salvation through development of their own conscience and atonement; and

- *Polizeiwissenschaft* ('policy science'), where prudent conduct – policed through detailed policies regulating micro-practices of daily living – was rewarded with economic prosperity and social security.

#### Neo-liberalism: government from afar

These ensembles of discipline and security twist slightly in Foucault's dissection of *liberalism* as the modern governmental rationality of western capitalism, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Liberalism is commonly understood as a political apparatus concerned with the maximization of individual liberties, and in particular, with the defense of so-called 'natural social processes' – civil society, the economy, wealth generation, the family, religion, population growth, urbanization, etc. – against State encroachments (Hindess, 1996, p. 124). The rights, responsibilities, freedoms and choices of individuals are protected, while the State undertakes to maximize the conditions of possibility for such autonomous actions, e.g. security in the form of rule of law, civil peace and safety from invasion/threat, infra-structural facilities, liberal constitutional rights, etc.

*Laissez-faire* is, in Foucault's paradoxical formulation, a governmental injunction to carefully and rationally regulate non-regulation, and so to 'govern at a distance' (Gordon, 1991, p. 17). This distancing of State authority, and concomitant reduction in State welfare intervention, would seem to be achieved through a transformation of the relationship between (institutionalized) knowledges and government. Government as 'science' and '*techné*' is bound up with the 'political arithmetic' of the population – through detailed documentation, conduct, capacities, contingencies and chance events may be calculated (Dean, 1994b; Rose, 1990, 1998). Such swarming knowledges are purveyed then, not to govern individuals per se – who are ideally fabricated through disciplinary power as self-governing, responsible, autonomous and rational - but to efficiently maximize 'men's relations to things' (sic), such as wealth, fertility, health, property, resources, knowledge, citizenship, etc. (Foucault, cited in McNay, 1994, p. 115).



Thus, Foucault found the humanist subject – the desiring, aspiring, norm-anxious, agentic, reflexive, docile, entrepreneurial subject – invented within neo/liberal conditions of industrialized and entrepreneurial capitalism (Hindess, 1996). Post-war developments of neo-liberalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century fabricated this *homo economicus* as ‘behaviorially manipulable’; that is, rationally responsive to modifications of its economic environment, in terms of assessing new resources and competitive opportunities, making (informed) choices, and accepting responsibility for self-care and care of others (Gordon, 1991, p. 43; cf. Foucault, 1988; O’Malley, 1999, 2000a; Rose, 1996).

It is widely understood that Foucault’s work on ‘governmental rationalities’ was an attempt to explicitly connect his (maligned) microphysics of power (viz. genealogy of the subject) with macrophysics of governance, domination, politics and Statecraft – although his ideas had already been moving along these lines in formulations of population-government around public health in ‘disciplinary societies’ (Foucault, 1977), and ‘bio-politics’ (Foucault, 1978).

Marxist critics (in particular) questioned Foucault’s micro-textural analysis of shifting, unstable, reversible powers (a) as limited in their exclusion of the coercive and stabilized power of oppression, (b) as nihilistically negating ‘escape’ from pervasive disciplinary power, (c) as disregarding individual or collective struggle towards social liberation/justice; and they also questioned (d) his political affiliations and tacit support of liberalism through his failure to critique its ‘dysfunctionality’ and ‘inadequacy’ (see reviews: Fraser, 1989; Gordon, 1991; Hindess, 1996; Howarth, 2000; Lemke, 2000; McNay, 1994).

Such Marxist critics would not have enjoyed Foucault’s (1991a) responses. Firstly, he argued that similar kinds of analyses of ‘political practices’ (not of ideology or institutions) could usefully be applied to the imbricated domains of *self*-government, government *of/by others*, and *State*-government (p. 102). In other words, rationalities and policies of statutory practice are intricately woven into (1) government of one’s own household or family – here conceived ‘as a privileged *segment* internal to population, and as a fundamental *instrument* in its [population’s] government’ (p. 100, my emphases); and (2) governmental and ethical

self-formation, self-stylization and personal conduct (cf. Foucault, 1988). For Dean (1994a), this is a process of 'political subjectification' – the treatment of individuals 'as if they were' political and sovereign subjects and citizens – whereby authorities shape conduct and capacities (government practices), to act on themselves (ethical practices) (p. 155-6). I return to Foucault's (1988) 'techniques of the self' shortly.

Secondly, Foucault's (1991a) governmentality refuses to reduce, centralize or demonize government (or *mis*government) in the 'individuality', 'unity' or 'function' of the State; and sticks with the modes of 'pluralization' and 'relativization' through which power operates, and the administrative State becomes 'governmentalized' – that is, instrumentalities of the State are incorporated, combined, reconfigured and deployed within other strategies, agencies and authorities of government (p. 103).

This alludes to Foucault's (1977, 1978, 1982) 'apparatus' of power – as a tangled matrix of relations, forces and zones that can be established between heterogeneous elements, both discursive and non-discursive, including discourses, institutions, media campaigns, subject positions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, scientific statements, doctors' examinations, childrearing manuals, philanthropic organizations, statutory health policies, etc. (cf. Foucault, 1980, cited in Tamboukou, 2003, p. 38). Such apparatuses reproduce power relations through sustaining certain types of knowledge and techniques germane to particular populations – with the objective of securing safety, welfare, longevity, health, economic success, happiness, etc. Thus, Foucault (1991a) sees governmentality as:

An ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific and complex form of power, which has as its target the *population*, its principal form of political economy *knowledge*, and its essential technical means *apparatuses of security* (p. 102, my emphases).

### **Apparatuses of security, against risk**

Liberal governmentality rests on political jurisprudence, as a civil society based on social contract and individual rights; and economic functioning, as a commercial society based on increasing profit, prosperity, progress and enterprise (Gordon, 1991). Here individual

freedoms, fabricated through disciplinary power and/or techniques of the self as 'human capital', are harnessed into a system of privatized social order and security. Foucault (1991a) thus saw 'liberty as a condition of security' (and vice versa); and also that the dominant governmental rationality in western liberal (capitalist) democracies was 'security' (p. 102) – referring to interdependent circuitry between political and social security. Foucault characterized mechanisms of social security operating in three directions: (a) *detailing* series of possible and probable events; (b) *evaluating* through calculation of comparative cost; and (c) *prescribing* norms, or 'an optimal mean within a tolerable bandwidth of variation' (Gordon, 1991, p. 20; cf. Rose, 1990).

With the constitution of contemporary bodies/minds as 'ethically 'risk-pledged', Dean (1997) finds such social security apparatuses drawing on three dominant risk configurations that work in a tense relation between collectivizing and individualizing risk (p. 217-8):

- ❑ *Insurantal risk*, as calculated actuarial evaluations of the possibilities for loss of health, property or employment that disrupt capital accumulation – and calculated guarantees against or compensations for these chance events, e.g. medical insurance, social security disability grants, etc. (cf. Ewald, 1991);
- ❑ *Epidemiological risk*, statistically establishes health and disease patterns in specific populations, and couples these to 'underlying causal variables', with the objective of predicting and controlling risk factors at population/individual levels, e.g. HIV/Aids awareness and safer sex campaigning directed at particular groups of risky subjects;
- ❑ *Case management risk*, as qualitative assessment of the pathologized or threatening practices – and technical or therapeutic normalization by experts – of individuals (through treatment), or 'risk groups' (through publicization of 'problems').<sup>8</sup>

A crucial point is that Foucault did not explicitly use the term 'risk' in his own writing/talking about such security apparatuses. O'Malley (1999, 2000b, 2001) notes that (Foucault's) governmental approach to security has a tangled and multi-linear genealogy within a nexus between forces of developing (neo-liberal) capitalism and class consciousness, and developing techniques of risk probability-calculation and population surveillance, that has been elaborated in disconnected bits and disciplines, by others.

Thus, for example, Castel (1991) has tracked the socially constituted notion of 'risk' from earlier incarnations as 'dangerousness', where the tactics of social defense involved intervention to isolate and incarcerate mad/bad individuals to protect the rest of the industrialized population from harm or disruption; to the 'abstract calculation of undesirable *potential* harm' (and self-reformative *preventative* action) that the public health machinery has become (p. 281). Risk is calculated through statistical correlations and probabilities, based on epidemiological survey of populations rather than actual close-encounters with dangerous bodies/minds; and this has spawned 'a new mode of surveillance, that of systematic pre-detection', that is obsessively assumed to anticipate and *neutralize* (through the conduct of conduct) 'all possible forms of dangerous irruption' (p. 288).

As Castel (1991) points out, this results in the production of 'a potentially infinite multiplication of the possibilities for [governmental] intervention', because all situations contain potentially uncontrollable or unpredictable factors (p. 289). Foucault famously suggested in a later interview that: 'My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous. My position therefore does not lead to apathy, but to hyper- and vigilant activism [to prevent things going mildly or badly wrong]' (cited in Gordon, 1991, p. 46-7).

Like Foucault's (1978) questions about sexual repression then and now, (Australian) Deborah Lupton (1999b) wonders if 'we moderns' are exposed to more hazards, dangers, threats and risks than in previous historical eras. She contrasts responses via several influential risk-logics within contemporary psychosocial and socio-cultural theorization that constitute different approaches to the origins/functions of risk, risk-prevention and risk-actors (see reviews from various perspectives: Adams, 1995; Caplan, 2000; Dean, 1999; Douglas, 1992; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Joffe, 1999; Lupton, 1999c; O'Malley, 2000a, 2000b; Ten Brummelhuis & Herdt, 1995). I will caricature Lupton's (1999b) conceptualization to broadly position governmental approaches to risk.

Lupton (1999b) – following Douglas (1992) - firstly cleaves ‘techno-scientific’ from ‘socio-cultural’ approaches to risk. The ‘*techno-scientific*’, model of risk is beloved of (uncritical forms of) public health government, where the concern is to empirically determine how individuals respond to ‘real localized risk situations’, and to intervene to undo their risky resistances to altering risky behavior (Lupton, 1999b, p. 17-24). This is the dominant way in which risk is managed in public health activism (see ‘epidemiological risk’ above, ‘realist reading’ in Chapter 1, and further discussions and critique in Chapters 4 & 6).

Lupton (1999b) then casts ‘*socio-cultural*’ models of risk as emphasizing social, institutional and cultural contexts in which risk is ‘understood’, ‘negotiated’ and ‘constituted’ (cf. Bolton, 1995); these models are organized into three broad clusters:

- A ‘*cultural-symbolic*’ strand explores how notions of risk are culturally, metaphorically and bodily deployed to establish and sustain real and imagined boundaries between purity-pollution, safety-danger, us-them and Self-Other (e.g. Douglas, 1992; Goffman, 1963/1990; Joffe, 1999).
- A ‘*risk society*’ perspective (e.g. Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991), posits conditions of modernity <sup>9</sup> that reproduce the ambivalent power of expertise – the need for authoritative security as truth, and its failure through proliferating (ideological) truthful versions. ‘Reflexive modernization’ refers to the (constructivist) fashioning of modern subjectivity around pervasive risk-consciousness: a self that accepts culpability for risk, responsibility for risk-avoidance, and (rationally) selects appropriate knowledge and action from available options (Lupton, 1999b, p. 82).<sup>10</sup>
- *The governmentals...*

### Governing risk via ethical, responsible selves

Juxtaposed against previous socio-cultural risk-logics, Foucault’s ‘governmentality’ is positioned by Lupton (1999b) as ‘strongly social constructionist’ (cf. ‘post-structuralist’) with its characteristic multi-linear matrix of discourses and relations of force/power, and socially constituted notion of ‘risk’ (p. 84). Foucauldian risk is made to appear as a discursive phenomenon through particular knowledges and techniques, and which then become the

constituted (and recalcitrant) surface for conducting and administering conduct. Thus, risk is a 'calculative rationality *for action*', a technique for government, rather than an objective thing or probabilistic hazard in itself (cf. Castel, 1991; Dean, 1999; O'Malley, 2000a; Rose, 1990); and so, the genealogies, domains, instruments and targets of risk-government shift and proliferate in disparate eras, domains in a single era, populations and sites of struggle (O'Malley, 2001). Such uneasy discontinuities are evident in Foucault's own writings on subjectivity and government.

I follow this Foucauldian line of thinking about risk – as 'calculative rationality for action' – in this thesis, where dominant epidemiological (techno-scientific) knowledges are taken to 'drive' responses to the HIV/Aids epidemic. Thus, (a) realist readings of media discourse, encoded to decode in particular ways (see Chapter 1), (b) statistics of HIV-infection (see Chapters 4, 6 and 7), and (c) 'risky adolescents' as sexually fabricated through Knowledge, Attitudes, Perceptions and Behaviour (KAPB) surveys (see Chapter 4), are repeatedly configured to unpick subjective/societal governmental action. My argument does not seek to 'disprove' such truths, but to explore their operations and effects in persuading, and perpetually re-inscribing, right (risk-safe) action, through pedagogical media discourse aimed at mothers.

Foucault's (1991a) *On governmentality* lecture found 'discipline' – and concomitant instruments of surveillance/examination by institutionalized gazes, and normalization – pivotal within a 'security society', with regulated/regulating subjects positioned as active governors of themselves and others (rather than passive dupes of power, as innumerable critics have suggested). Foucault's (1985, 1986, 1988) later works were concerned with intricate counterbalancing of techniques of domination/government with analysis of techniques of the self (subjectification), in the sense of 'a practice of liberty' and 'the aesthetics of existence' (McNay, 1994, p. 133-5).

Here, techniques of the self were situated as ethical practices within the minutiae of everyday life, as 'self-stylization' and as 'maximizing human capital' (Foucault, cited in Lupton, 1999b, p. 88). Thus, for example, risk-reducing strategies of condom use, or talking

openly with children about sex, concretely construe an ethically worthy self through private/public display of self-mastery, self-restraint, and respectful care of the self, and of others. This intensified the relationship of the self to the self, and fashioned the 'styles' and the 'limits' of identity, expressed through entrepreneurial attention to the body/soul as an ongoing reflexive project of 'becoming' (Foucault, 1988). The process of self-stylization is not voluntaristic, authentically self-invented or perfectly completed (McNay, 1994). It is governmental precisely in its implication of (a) its truthful inscription by institutional knowledge and expertise, (b) its 'action on action', (c) its vigilance, and (d) its perpetual transgressions and re-inscriptions (Dean, 1994a). This perspective of the technical self thus casts risk avoidance as a morally charged enterprise requiring rational, knowledgeable, disciplined and skilled subjects as 'entrepreneurs' (O'Malley, 1992).

### **New Public Health and critique of neo-liberalism**

I have tried, in this section, to connect Foucault's governmentality to contemporary apparatuses of security - social policy, risk and New Public Health. This vast and fraught field is lacerated by multiple, divergent lines of force, which construe political and theoretical positions for multifarious critique. Lemke (2001) wryly notes that critique about Foucault's governmentality is frequently pitched as criticism of the dysfunctionality neo-liberalism itself – as (a) '*wrong* rationality' (cf. ideology), (b) '*wrong* economic-political practices' that obliterate 'social rights', and (c) '*wrong* anti-humanist' approach to mechanically determined subjectivity (p. 6). While Lemke 'takes these points', he warns that such (Marxist) critiques are unbecoming towards Foucault's (critical) project of destabilizing the foundational binary dualisms between domination and liberation, and between State and self, of neo-liberal discourse. Furthermore, Nettleton (1997) reassures us that government of selves, others and populations do not rely (unfortunately sometimes) on certainties and unequivocal 'outcomes' regarding becoming healthy, wealthy or wise – any/all power always already fails to tame or train aggregate or individual actions in predictable ways (p. 216).

Nevertheless, (Australian) writers on New Public Health – where Foucault's ideas (as tools) have been put to productive use in unpicking the effects of the neo-liberal risk configurations outlined above – have commented on three powerful (negative) effects. These appear as the fabrication of (1) the 'at risk' individual, (2) the imperative of self-management of risk, and (3) authoritative expertise and myth of risk-freedom (Petersen, 1997; Petersen & Lupton, 1996). Thus, regulating individuals by collectivist risk devolves responsibility to individuals for conduct of their risky conduct (O'Malley, 1992). In other words, individuals, and small, designated groups (such as families), are increasingly expected to take care of themselves, and to participate in/with (advocated, preventative, moral, expert) governmental practices to avoid or limit potential harm/risk to themselves and to others.

Such endeavours have also authorized scrutiny of the micro-practices of individuals' and families' lives, and assumed 'entrepreneurial subjects' that are psychologically, physically and socially able to prudently and calculatingly act – if disciplinary power is the capacity or liberty for action – on themselves and others in particular ways (Petersen & Lupton, 1996, p. ix). O'Malley (1992) has dubbed this 'The New Prudentialism', modeled on the fastidious over-regulation of self-awareness by moralistic policies and policing of *polizeiwissenschaft*, and prudent self-government for the sake of social tranquility.

To some extent, these (Australian) critiques are written against the lack, in Foucault's own work, of genealogies that applied his later governmental interstices, between techniques of domination and subjectification, to actual risk practices and situations within public health activism. Foucault's (1985, 1986) studies on techniques of the (aesthetic, sexual) self cohered around a new complex of truth-power-ethics, and retreated into Greek antiquities to fashion the 'ethically styled self' (or lifestyle). These texts are read as 'utopian' and 'elitist' (see reviews: McNay, 1994; Tamboukou, 2003) – as removed from working with present conditions and limits, and removed from easy application to Foucault's previous concerns of population management.

Making such a leap into the risky neo-liberal present, Lupton (1999b) argues that while it (neo-liberalism) inscribes personal freedoms and individual rights, and relief from overt



State interference; (a) it withholds 'social rights' from citizens – for example, access to welfare support in emergencies, or protection from exploitative effects of the 'market economy'. Furthermore, it (b) shrinks conceptualization of 'the social', from a mass collective, population or community of action, to individuals or small groups in isolated cells (p. 100), which (c) powerfully 'privatizes' risk and risk-prevention strategies. Along these lines, Dean (1997) argues that:

Here [in governmentality] we witness the 'multiple responsabilization' of individuals, families and households, for the risks of everyday living – of poor physical or mental health, of unemployment, of poverty in old age, of weak educational performance, of becoming victims of crime (p. 218).

This thesis adds responsabilization for HIV/Aids risk/safety to this list. Referring directly to Ewald's (1991) insurantal risk (see above), the South African HIV/Aids epidemic draws on an economic discourse related to inequity of access to 'insurance of capital'; and hence, the burden of risk of illness, care of the sick, pedagogization of children's sexuality and unemployment is re-privatized into the family - and thereby classed, racialized, and gendered (see Chapter 4). This lends additional force to injunctions to parents to keep children risk-free – viz. sexually inactive, HIV-negative, 'not pregnant', well educated - as insurantal substitute-providers and custodians for the family/household. Such issues cut directly to other critiques of Foucauldian concepts, histories and ideologies, and to the risks (and benefits) of transferring them – as tools – to other conditions, contexts and domains.

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<sup>1</sup> European, American and Australian empirical and theoretical literatures on parental communication with children about sex – as disciplined micro-practices of the western psy-complex that fabricate inter/subjectivities - are read in Chapter 3 through the Foucauldian conceptual lenses (and arguments) established in this Chapter. South African literature is reviewed in Chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychiatrization of perverse pleasures*, as Foucault's (1978) fourth figure, is omitted here. My focus in this thesis reproduces the concerted heterosexual/reproductive (largely feminized) risk of HIV/Aids constituted in the *Lovelines* series itself. This is in keeping with dominant epidemiological constructions of 'African Aids' as (mostly) heterosexually transmitted (see Chapter 4).

<sup>3</sup> Muncie and Sapsford (1995) have articulated 'levels of analysis' of families - prioritized at different times for different purposes, even while acknowledging a weave between levels. For example: family as 'location' (site, cell, surface); as 'discourse' (knowledges about families); as 'practice' (how X is

done, at micro-levels); as 'target' (audience, entity 'at risk'); as 'policy' (State strategy); or as 'norm' (a general trend, established institutionally) (adapted, p. 32).

<sup>4</sup> Zaretsky (1976) found the nuclear family serving capitalism through offering (men) workers a 'haven' or 'safety valve', where emotional security, sex, nurturance and a semblance of authority in a 'private space' undid the alienation and exploitation of their workplace; and constituted the economic liabilities and domestic patterns of consumption to enforce their continued labour.

<sup>5</sup> Cooper (1971) objected to inside-outside, us-them, private-public binaries reproduced through nuclear familial ideology; and the 'stultifying socialization' - into dependence and emotional possessiveness, into gendered roles, into sexual taboos - that restricted capacities and skills to engage others, beyond the enclosed family-cell, in diverse and mutually beneficial, caring and pedagogical relationships.

<sup>6</sup> Haim Ginott (1973) - as American developmental psychologist and writer of best-selling parenting manuals - has popularized this child-centred parenting of 'teenagers', viz. dialoging gradated autonomy with empathy; replacing conflict (criticism and insults) with praise; and informed choices and taking responsibility for consequences. While he advocates close involvement in and monitoring of teenagers' lives, he famously offers these guidelines to parents for 'the troubled years': don't confuse understanding with approval; don't look for trouble; don't rub it in; don't invite dependence; don't pick on details; don't violate privacy; don't preach and make speeches; don't label them; don't make stereotypical predictions; don't use reverse-psychology or tough-love (p. xi).

<sup>7</sup> Foucault was active in the *GIP: Groupe d'information sur les prisons*.

<sup>8</sup> Dean (1997) addresses how particular 'problem cases' enter population-based risk strategies through their spectacular function in media discourse (cf. gibbet-displays). 'Cases' are deployed to direct self-help through expertise, to scare transgressors into discipline, to signpost routes of referral for help-seeking, to de-stigmatize issues or conditions, or to gain support for coercive measures taken against disruptive or recalcitrant individuals (p. 217-8). Along these lines, Patton (1996) analyses (American) media representations of a 'convicted pedophile'; and Schostak (1993) has examined representations of 'heroes' and 'villains' in popular culture that 'educate' moral discipline and right action through inscribing values about 'goodness' and 'evil' (e.g. about sex and disease, violence and war, race and discrimination).

<sup>9</sup> Beck (1992) and Giddens (1992) configure conditions of modernity that proliferate 'risk communications' in a 'risk society/culture': (a) increasingly complex scientific/statistical, multivariate designs that proliferate risk-factors; (b) global media that disperse such information quickly/widely; (c) globalized risks that are less personally manageable and more anxiety-provoking, e.g. HIV/Aids, nuclear war; and (d) rapid social changes in western societies post-1945 that have destabilized 'traditions' and 'truths', e.g. medical science, religious faith, the family (adapted from Lupton, 1999b, p. 9-12).

<sup>10</sup> See Dean (1999) on the fractious differences between Beck's (1992) and Giddens' (1991) positions on risk society/culture. Dean (1999) finds favourable links between risk society theorists and (Foucauldian) governmentals; but O'Malley (1999 & 2001) disputes this. O'Malley (2001) argues that risk society theorists are concerned with slippage between 'calculable threats' and global impacts of 'modernization risks'; while Foucault's governmental rationalities/techniques originate within 19<sup>th</sup> century forces of population-based probabilistic theory (cf. epidemiology) and class-based capitalism (see Castel, 1991).

## CHAPTER 3

### PARENTAL PEDAGOGIZATION OF CHILDREN'S SEXUALITY

#### 1. TALKING ABOUT SEX WITH CHILDREN

'Sex education' – in its panoply of forms from statutory policies, to careful curricula in schools, to staged informalities in homes - is a fraught site of discursive struggle around the nature of child development, sexuality, sex, moral values, knowledge, pedagogy, 'the family', and risk. The pedagogization of children's sexuality is taken to represent 'the social order', or social inscription of the body with appropriately sexualized knowledge about its 'inner nature' (Grosz, 1990, 1993); and by its opposite term, the breakdown of sexual socialization signifies social breakdown, crisis or even catastrophe (Thorogood, 1992). Thus, any talk of sex pedagogy is lacerated with vehement ideological, cultural, political, economic and public health agendas about what appropriate sexuality and sex *should* be, and what effective pedagogy *should* be/do, to achieve or maintain social stability and risk-safety. This thesis focuses on parental pedagogization of children's sex/uality as a governmental tactic to ward off individual/public risks of HIV/Aids. The previous chapter set up Foucault's normalizing apparatuses of family-sexuality-risk, and expertise-examination-judgement; and this chapter reads the micro-practices of intergenerational communication about sex in families – its panicky, protective imperatives of subjective and social prophylaxis, and how these stick and slip – through that Foucauldian lens.

Writing this review-chapter was panicky in itself. There is, as Foucault (1978) sagely promised, an 'immense verbosity' of social scientific (and psychological) writing on parental interactions with children about sex. This incorporates (a) copious empirical descriptions of historicized waves of 'worrying realities', and (b) innumerable interventions to ameliorate such crises - research projects, public health policies, and how-to manuals for parents written by experts. There are also (c) relentless 'evaluations' of the non/efficacy of these in

persuading parents' repressive attitudes to sex, and taciturn and defensive communicative behaviour.

Such efforts are underpinned by thin, fragmented across disciplines, and outmoded theoretical explanation – theory that is instrumentally applied rather than critically reflective or contextually re-built (e.g. Andre, Frevert & Schuchmann, 1989; Diorio, 1985; Willig, 1999b; Wyness, 2000). The territory is uneven ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically. The risk contingencies of different eras and contexts constantly unsettle imperatives directed at parents, and remobilize them in different ways. For example, discursive skirmishes around the emergence of HIV/Aids, statutory policies on schools-based 'sex education', or constructions of 'adolescent sexuality', in Britain, America, Australia or Holland, position parents within particular 'cultures of parenting' and (sexual) custodianships over children (see Lupton & Tulloch, 1996, 1998; Schalet, 2000; Valentine, 1997; Wyness, 2000).

Furthermore, the 'problem' of so-called parental inadequacy with regards sex-talk with children is fabricated through (quantitative or qualitative) self-report studies with parents, teachers and young people; all invested to varying degrees with 'social desirability' (Fisher, 1993) – as evidence of interpellation by the hails/wails of expertise - and also confusion, anxiety, disgruntlement, defensiveness, resistance and failure. Such inter/subjective performances in interviews and discussion-groups, as interactively negotiated experiences, beliefs, opinions and hopes, are refracted through the particular advocacy positioning of researchers, writers, critics and activists as 'realities', 'practices', and 'truths' about sex communication in domestic cells (cf. Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

This review is *not* exhaustive. It skims wide surfaces looking for discursive trends and crisscrossing lines of force; and it dips into occasional empirical moments where these engaged my Foucauldian eye/I. The review explicitly seeks to foreground parent-adolescent sex pedagogy (or mother-daughter conversations, as this routinely turns out), a narrower and altogether fiercer issue than conversations with 'generic children'. There are obvious dangers in trying to herd together the above complexities into neat parameters and

principles, but my intent is as a recursive fold – to allow such Euro-American-Australian psy-complex parameters and principles, and their ruptures and partial defeats, to run into more troubling contingencies of HIV/Aids risk within South African discourses about parenting and sexuality in Chapter 4.

The review folds three ways. First, by way of statement of ‘the problem’, a discursive complex configures directly causal relationships between ‘adolescent sexuality’, ‘risk’ and ‘communication crisis’ (with parents). This reviews parents’ well-meaning but stumbling micro-practices, and youthful misgivings about and unwillingness to receive parental missives. Second, pedagogization of children’s sexuality is embedded in a web of disputes over its curriculum – in terms of content, style, and conduit. This goes to historicized, definitional shifts, and (feminist) uneasiness between home- and schools-based imperatives. Finally, the theoretical frameworks that embed the invincible expert-techniques advocated to parents for sex communication with children are reviewed. This applies the shifting praxes of childrearing reviewed in Chapter 2 to ‘talking about sex’.

## 2. STORM, STRESS AND COMMUNICATION CRISIS

### Targeting parents: we’re doing our best

The evergreen notion of ‘family-in-crisis’ within contexts of social upheaval or rapid transformation (see Chapter 2), worked with two pivotal ideas: that children are vulnerable and therefore need *more* protection and socialization from parents; and that ‘right action’ (as prophylaxis) by authorities and parents is essential to ‘save’ children, and ‘solve’ social problems (Wyness, 2000). Parents have been relentlessly targeted with responsibilities to talk to their children about sex, but this positioning has shifted historically from *primary sex educators* and inculcators of values. In step with concerns of late-modernity, positioning of parents shifted to *correctors* of so-called misinformation about sex that flowed freely from multiple other, less reliable sources (Andre et al., 1989; Gebhardt, 1977); and more recently to *discussants* of psychological, social or sexual issues – and risk-reduction strategies - that might crop up within contexts of proliferating risks to children, and particularly to

adolescent girls (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; Rosenthal, Feldman & Edwards, 1998; Tonks, 1996). As I will demonstrate below, these kinds of sex-talking required different techniques and relationships with children; which produced shifting resistances and obstacles to communication.

Bell (1995) seizes on the agenda of child-protection in this education, correction and discussion. Thus, her (British) genealogy of incest prohibition finds the interpellations of parents as pedagogues historically overlaid, as follows: (a) to prohibit children's masturbation; (b) to ward off incest within families; (c) to delay hetero-reproductive penetrative sexual intercourse – because of a discontinuous array of risks – until a more appropriate time of emotional, physical, financial and conjugal maturity; (d) to ward off sexual abuse from outside the family; and (e) to foster appreciation for the place of (responsible) sexuality within a healthy and happy body/self (subject), 'relationship', family and population (Bell, 1995). 'Sex education in the home' – in developed contexts – seems contemporaneously pitched against risks of sexual abuse of children, and unwanted pregnancy (e.g. J. Kitzinger, 1997; Valentine, 1997).

Research findings on how parents have responded to these interpellations are not easy to interpret. There seems to be an inevitable slip between (expert) 'ideals' and (family) 'practices'. Most parents (mothers and fathers) who participated in contemporary research studies present themselves as wanting or planning to talk about sex with their children in comfortable and approachable ways (e.g. Croft & Asmussen, 1992; Ingham & Kirkland, 1997; Koblinksy & Atkinson, 1982; Roberts, Kline & Gagnon, 1978; Rosenthal et al., 1998). Yet, most parents found these conversations, at times, and increasingly so with older children, 'embarrassing' and 'difficult'; and themselves 'anxious', 'inhibited' and 'ill equipped' with information (e.g. Baldwin & Baranowski, 1990; Wyness, 1992). Such accounts from parents, and their impressions of themselves, are confirmed by various experts and sexual health activists (e.g. Chilman, 1990; Croft & Asmussen, 1992); and by adolescents (e.g. Lees, 1993; Lupton & Tulloch, 1996, 1998; Martin, 1996; Measor, Tiffin & Miller, 2000).

But Wyness' (1992) British study finds parents – particularly mothers (see below) – despite their embarrassments, anxieties and 'mistakes' - making an effort to talk about sex with children (a) in 'ordinary' and 'sensible' ways, as part of daily family-routines, e.g. watching television and discussing events/issues, (b) in elaborating on topics children bring back from school or friends, and (c) in even (occasionally) joking about condoms. Here, working class parents were concerned about the authority of their information or counsel (particularly on HIV/Aids), and wished schools would incorporate more substantive 'sex education' curricula; and middle class parents were concerned with the 'timing' of the topics discussed with adolescents, and with their (adolescents') obvious disinterest, discomfort and unwillingness in exchanges.

Most writing on parental communication with older children alludes to a 'communication crisis' that materializes between adolescents and parents (e.g. Apter, 2004; Chilman, 1990; Lees, 1993; Martin, 1996; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993; White & DeBlassie, 1990). Seemingly inscribed by hegemonic psychoanalytic explanations about the distancing of adolescents from parents as libidinal/authoritative objects, and the 'solidification of sexual selves' (Martin, 1996, p. 11), this conflict runs in several directions. I will track three directions - lack of workable 'advice', ambivalent mother-daughter dyads, and the stormy-and-stressed adolescent figure – below.

First, childrearing material, in its pervasive forms, routinely concerns techniques of communication about sex with young children; or is unspecific about the age of (generic) children it refers to (cf. Carlson & Crase, 1983). There is certainly no shortage of academic or popular literature about 'adolescence' – usually pertaining to sexuality and risk - but this writing seems displaced into specialist tomes, manuals and articles. Simanski (1998), in a thematic content analysis of articles on sex-talk with children in American women's magazines, argues that exclusion of pragmatic, expert advice on sex-talk with adolescents makes three assumptions. (1) According to (Freudian) psychoanalytic theory – again – children's 'personalities' are precariously and richly established in the first years of life, and in comparison, 'adolescence' as a stage is fairly thinly theorized. (2) The 'technique' of maternal talking about sex (as risk-protection) is already installed, and simply continues. (3)

Mothers 'know how to parent' by the time children reach adolescence. Indeed, to the contrary. Where sex was figured as informally and openly discussed with pre-pubertal children, discussion normatively decreased as children get older – boys in particular (Martin, 1996; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993; White & DeBlassie, 1990; Wyn & White, 1997).

### **A mothers' work is never done**

Second, the work of talking about sex is gendered. Mothers, positioned as responsible for the larger part of daily childrearing and emotional communication, handle most/all conversations about sex with developing children (e.g. Brock & Jennings, 1993; Croft & Asmussen, 1992; Gebhardt, 1977; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993; Rozema, 1986; Schalet, 2000; Wyness, 1992). And they are customarily the primary source of information and counsel about menarche, menstruation and reproduction for girls (e.g. Andre et al., 1989; Apter, 1990, 2004; Lee, 2003; Lees, 1993; Martin, 1996; Mueller & Powers, 1990; Rosenthal et al., 1998; Thompson, 1990).

Empirical findings then figure a simplistic bifurcation between adolescent girls who (a) establish harmonious, supportive, intimate and open relationships with mothers regarding sex/uality (e.g. Gavin & Furman, 2000; Thompson, 1990); and those whose (b) interactions about sex with mothers are subsumed with rules, warnings, admonitions and moralistic judgements (e.g. Brock & Jennings, 1993). 'Sex-positive' and 'sex-negative' effects on the sexualities, embodiments and experiences of sex for girls are attached to (a) and (b) respectively. Brannen, Dodd, Oakley and Storey (1994) argue that such bifurcation into 'communicator-mothers' who grant adolescent daughters' sexual autonomy, and 'regulator-mothers' who restrict it (and would rather not know about their sexualized activities), masks tangled classed and acculturated positions – in the context of diversely composed British households.

Henwood and Coughlan's (1993) review of (British) literature on mother-daughter 'closeness' argues that feminist writers have predominantly figured mother-daughter inter-subjectivities as intricate sites of gender and sexual inscription/performance (cf.



identification), inflamed by the psychoanalytic discourse of 'social object relations' (cf. Chodorow, 1978), or versions thereof. This constitutes the central axis of ambivalence around which mothers and daughters struggle over enmeshment, separateness, object choices and thwarted needs (or loss) – infusing interactions with (un/conscious) conflict (e.g. Arcana, 1981; Benjamin, 1988; Flax, 1993; Magrab, 1979). Apter (1990, 2004) has suggested that young women and mothers are less concerned with individuation per se than with re-negotiation of ways to 'connect' with one another. Other Foucauldian-feminists have emphasized the regulative operations and effects of mothering daughters – discursively constituting and mobilizing 'good mothers' as relay points for government of risk-safe populations (e.g. Urwin, 1985; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

Fathers' performance of sex pedagogical communication with children is unilaterally depicted in empirical literature as negligible; except in instances where fathers' participation in domestic, familial and nurturant tasks is high (Baldwin & Baranowski, 1990; Fisher, 1990); they are single-parents (Brannen et al., 1994); or they are tasked (by mothers) to address sex with sons at puberty – customarily done in perfunctory, abstract and biological registers rather than relational/emotional (Pollack, 1998; Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 1997).

From a Foucauldian-feminist perspective, Bell (1995) finds marginalization of fathers as 'sex educators' of children normatively implicated in the genealogy of European 'incest taboo' – as an institutional apparatus of power operating through deployments of alliance and sexuality within nuclear families (see Chapter 2). The historicized sexualization of the family-space (through psychoanalysis) created the libidinal conditions for incest to emerge as a social/family problem – with fathers as targets, culprits and subjects. Whereas childrearing instructions to parents previously demanded prohibition of children's sexuality (masturbation), they now suggested qualified or conditional 'appropriate sexual exploration' by children (p. 234). Such risky areas were monitored and scaffolded more safely by omnipresent mothers in the domestic sphere. Along similar lines, prevalence in contemporary times of step- or blended families – where children are exposed to risks of incest from non-biological fathers or mothers' sexual partners – test 'blood-determined' deployments of alliance (and incest taboo) further (Bell, 1995).

Psychoanalytical perspectives – for example, in vastly different studies, Walkerdine's (1997) examination of representations of the 'daddy's girl' in popular culture, and Wolf's (1998) exploration of her own (and other girls') sexualization during the 1970s in America - find fathers (however distant) and father-figures to feature prominently in girls' development of awareness and power of their sexualities. Nevertheless, Brannen et al. (1994) found that young women in nuclear and non-nuclear households in Britain – across class and culture divisions – were significantly less likely to report 'close', 'communicative', or 'supportive' relationships with fathers (including biological, step- and non-resident fathers) than were young men.

### **Head-on conflict with storm-and-stress**

A third foundation for communication crisis between parents and young people appears in the hegemonic constitution of adolescent sexuality – via psychological, scientific and popular representations – through imperatives of Stanley Hall's (1904/1940) 'storm-and-stress' model (see Chapter 1). A causal and normalized relationship is thus asserted between destabilizing biological maturation, and immature psychological and social development, en route towards stable and mature civilization/citizenship. Youth are (universally) figured as sexually experimental/active, and 'irresponsible' – read risk-taking, impulsive, rebellious, and peer-influenced (e.g. Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; Patton, 1996; Warrick & Aggleton, 1990; Wilbraham, 2002). This construction feeds directly into (anxiety about) consequent risks of unprotected sex (Coleman & Roker, 1998; Measor et al., 2000; Moore, Rosenthal & Mitchell, 1996; White & DeBlassie, 1992; Wyn & White, 1997).

Through veiled psychoanalytic discourse (mostly), this imperative 'adolescent sexuality' is perceived as threatening and difficult to talk about. (a) It produces youth embarrassment about being so sexually/sexily inscribed, and resistance towards parental surveillance (e.g. Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; Measor et al., 2000). (b) It produces parental embarrassment at being exposed as a sexual being inscribed with sexual in/experiences, inhibitions and 'unresolved issues' (e.g. Baldwin & Baranowski, 1990; Rozema, 1986; Wyness, 2000); and a

sexual being inscribed with prurient and vested interests in overseeing the sexualized development of children (e.g. Patton, 1996; Stoler, 1995). (c) It also produces a 'family developmental crisis', with increased anxiety about parental communication, authority, power, conflict, and discipline of unruly bodies and selves (Brannen et al., 1994; Chilman, 1990).

This construction of adolescent sexuality places adolescents and parents on an inter-subjective 'collision course', as the one side pushes for sexual knowledge, experience and autonomy to establish 'maturity'; and the other side pushes back (particularly against girls) for delayed coitus on grounds of 'immaturity' and risk (Martin, 1996). Parents report that they retreat to 'traditional topics' - the 'reproductive plumbing' or 'abstract-biological' approach to sex (Whatley & Trudell, 1993) - to wittingly close down open-ended discussions that place them in the firing line. Parents recount fearfulness of adolescents' 'moodiness', where a stray comment may 'blow up' into a fight (Chilman, 1990; Wyn & White, 1997). Thus, 'difficult issues' relating to sex may be postponed, sometimes intending to come back to them at a more appropriate time (Coleman, Catan & Dennison, 1997; Ingham & Kirkland, 1997; Koblinsky & Atkinson, 1982); and sometimes postponed indefinitely, to avoid roiling conflict in the nuclear home that inevitably sloughs spouses and siblings in (White & DeBlassie, 1990). Spousal disagreement regarding 'domestic management' of adolescent sexual subjectivities is widely documented (e.g. Apter, 2004; Brannen et al., 1994; Chilman, 1990; Croft & Asmussen, 1992; Wyness, 1992).

The 'difficult issues' regarding adolescent sexuality typically involve values conflict; demarcating limits for appropriate behaviours (and sexual selves); and moving between contradictory registers of intimacy and censure of transgression, entitlement and postponement, autonomy and subjection to authority (Martin, 1996). This refers then to processes of disciplining individuation as sexual subjects (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998), rather than simply imparting biological information through talking about sex.

### **Family-dynamics + parent-talk = docile adolescent conduct (QED)**

These uneasy silences and high levels of suspicion and vigilance of adolescents seem (simplistically) read as repressive parental attitudes towards sex, possibly based on strong religious beliefs. The most demonized of conservative parental convictions is that talking about sex and sexuality 'causes' - either through inflammation of curiosity, or incitement of rebellion against parental decree - sexual experimentation and promiscuity; and thus parents avoid talking about sex to police children's 'innocence' through their 'ignorance' (e.g. Brannen et al., 1994; Baldwin & Baranowski, 1990; Measor et al., 2000; Patton, 1996; Rozema, 1986). In its extreme forms - sex-talk taboo, control over sources of sexual knowledge and risk, information provided on a strict 'need-to-know' basis (presumably, on wedding nights) - this is an increasingly difficult position to justify/maintain in late modernity due to proliferating sites of implantation of sex. It also assumes that parents 'know' and simply withhold conferring such 'complete' sexual knowledge onto children.

Thus, Wyness (2000) finds such sexual silences masking a deeper crisis of outmoded and dysfunctional parenting; where rupture of the traditional model of passive, incompetent childhood - for example, modern adolescents now turn to media, peers, school counselors and other role models for sexual inscription as social agents and actors in an increasingly complex world of sexualized risk - has left parents adrift: (a) without requisite technical registers on 'safer sex', (b) without moral/experiential authority in families, (c) confused about their parenting role and communicative practices, (d) fearful of conflict with children over discipline, (e) fearful of sexual risk, and (f) fearful of public censure or blame for failure of their discipline.

As Foucault (1978) noted, this parental failure is adjudicated along psychoanalytic lines of force that police deployments of sexuality and alliance. Andre et al. (1989) have argued that (antiquated forms of) psychoanalytic discourse are dominant - since the 1940s, still now, usually implicitly - in the copious empirical and intervention research endeavours that centralize, and isolate, the thematic and dynamic dimensions of parental/familial communication with children about sex from the swarming other 'points of implantation'

and interaction among which they are inevitably and formatively caught up. Such 'psychoanalytical' research designs entrench the causal relationship/narrative between (a) the *quality* of parent-child conversations about sex and sexuality, and (b) the *conduct* of adolescent sexual behaviour.<sup>1</sup> These endeavours also reproduce the discursive parameters of what the form and content of parental communication, and parental proximity, should be to ward off 'trouble'; and so 'responsibilize' parents for adolescent sexuality.

This leaves contemporary parents in a quandary – and needful of expert assistance – when their adolescent children are (mildly) 'uncomfortable' with their sex communication attempts, or unwilling to 'listen'; or even less obligingly, they repel conversational advances regarding sex with open hostility (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998). Kerr, Stattin and Trost (1999) have found that parental trust of adolescents – and the concomitant granting of greater degrees of autonomy – is related to their (parents') perceptions of how 'openly' their children share with them information and issues related to their lives. Such theorization also pathologizes more 'disciplinarian' styles of parenting adopted within, for example, 'working classed' or variously 'acculturated' families – as styles that resist dominant western psychocomplex dicta of 'openness' (Brannen et al., 1994; Burman, 1994; Walkerdine et al., 2001; Wetherell, 1995a, 1995b).

Two different scenarios of what Foucault called 'the conduct of conduct' – family dynamics that conduct adolescent sexual conduct in particular ways – will elaborate this. Blake, Simkin, Ledsky, Perkins and Calabrese (2001) evaluate several American intervention programmes that sought to promote parent-teenager sex-talk through parent-training workshops for inept parents (e.g. to elevate knowledge-bases about sex and HIV/Aids, develop effective communication and assertiveness skills, increase exchanges about sex with children, etc.). 'Effects' were 'measured' on adolescents subjected to such technologies, and those who were (un/fortunately) not so subjected. The desired effect on adolescents – 'delayed onset of sexual intercourse' (sic) – was fabricated within covariance of the following positive variables of parental communication technology (p. 53):

- Frequent exchanges about specific issues as they arise (rather than lengthy, abstract monologues about opinions or values);

- Depth and accuracy of parental knowledge, positive beliefs and comfort with subject matter (rather than defensiveness);
- Degree of family cohesion and closeness, related to expression of warmth, affection, support, and interest in one another's lives;
- General authoritative parenting style, including opportunities for parental monitoring, supervision and coercion;
- Generally amicable parent-child communication patterns *not* related to sex.

Thus, the (psy-complex) preferred practices of a 'child-centred' and 'authoritative' parenting style – that is, high in techniques associated with acceptance and involvement in children's lives, autonomy granting, and consistently enforced expectations, which impel self-regulation and cooperativeness (Baumrind, 1991) – is cast against its transgressions: 'authoritarian' (controlling and aloof), 'permissive' (lenient and overindulging/inattentive), and 'uninvolved' (lack of control/interest) styles. Exclusive concern with these Americanized parenting stylistics underpin much empirical research that has causally connected (particularly) girls' sexual activation in early adolescence, to: (a) authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting; (b) lack of expressed emotion and affectionate warmth in family dynamics; (c) lack of parental support and supervision; (d) single-parent families (particularly paternal absence); and (e) mothers' own sexual experience/history as an adolescent (see Moore & Rosenthal, 1993, p. 62-66).

Schalet (2000) examined Dutch and American 'cultural parenting logics' around family life, adolescents and sexuality – that is, the different ideological assumptions, taken-for-granted theoretical tools, and strategies for parenting. Her intricate discursive study was based on interviews with parents of 16-year old boys and girls, from similar class backgrounds in America and the Netherlands. This was not an argument about (cross) cultural differences per se, but a careful unpacking – along Foucauldian lines - of two deployments of sexuality (or 'governmental rationalities', see Chapter 2), which were both regulative in particular ways. American parents construed adolescent sexuality as a biologically driven, individually based activity, which caused disruption to the adolescent, the family and society. 'Restrictive parenting' was adopted that over-dramatized adolescent sexuality, and excluded

it from the family/household. Thus, sex was figured to happen in the absence of adult supervision, opportunistically, as a form of furtive rebellion, at parties, clubs, and after school at friends' houses. These strategies maintained the veneer of a stable, conflict-free family, unless adolescents broke strict rules regarding curfews.

Schalet's Dutch parents constituted adolescent sexuality as a 'normal' phenomenon that organically led to emphasis of an intimate relationship with a 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend', and sexual/social responsibility of adolescents. This process – of developing physical and emotional closeness with another, levels of sexualized negotiation and decision-making about contraception or condom-use – was normalized and included into family dynamics/network, which provided the site for genial monitoring (which Schalet terms 'gezelligheid', or pleasant togetherness), elaborate verbal communication, and high degrees of self-regulation.

#### **Youth activation as knowledge-bricoleurs: we'll say what we want/need**

As Wyness (2000) wryly notes, 'while policy-makers and practitioners are busying themselves with child-protection strategies, the knowledge bases of these approaches have become increasingly contested' (p. 4). During the 1990s, and with the increase of HIV/Aids risk, there has been a sharp falling away in social scientific writing of the positioning of parents as *primary* sexual socializers of young people. This appears related to a growing realization of shifting interstices between (a) proliferating sites of implantation and technologies of transmission of/for sex; and (b) theories of modern sexual subjectivity, not necessarily forged in relations of subordination to adult/parental authority (e.g. Lupton & Tulloch, 1996, 1998; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993, 1998; Wolf, 1998). Thus, different kinds of 'sexual knowledge' appear – for example, biomedical facts; relevant experiential narratives from experts, siblings or best friends; values clarification; techniques of safer sex; erotic registers of pleasure; sexual negotiation skills; intimacy skills - and adolescents, as active sexual subjects, are figured as needing to augment (and sometimes repair damages from) parental discussions with 'something more' to shore up their risk-protection and normal psychosexual development (e.g. Tonks, 1996; Patton, 1996; Warwick & Aggleton, 1990).

In terms of what adolescents 'need', Aggleton (1989) has, for example, called for a 3-tier model of sex pedagogization, requiring (a) accurate information, in which parents may participate if able/willing; (b) skills and strategies for safer sexual practice; and (c) peer-led programmes to create enabling youth communities for normative change and (sexual) right action (p. 168). This approach has focused attention on the roles best friends, peers, schools-based curricula, media, siblings, extra-familial professionals, and youth organizations, play in sexuality awareness and sexualized activities of youth. It also represents a move away from traditional psychosocial approaches to 'socialization' and 'development' of (incompetent, vulnerable) children, towards understanding young people's positions as agents within the shifting matrices of responsibilities, risks, rights and relationships of sexual citizenship in late modernity (Evans, 1993).

Furthermore, this approach has spawned a strand of 'child-centred' research that (fairly uncritically) claims to concern and capture what young people say they want and need from parents, schoolteachers, and other sources, in terms of their own constructions of sexuality, sex, risk and effective sex pedagogization – instead of the adult- or expert-accounts that have materialized objects and subjects in particular planes of sight (e.g. Brock & Jennings, 1993; Crawford, Turtle & Kippax, 1990; Croft & Asmussen, 1992; Lees, 1993; Lupton & Tulloch, 1996, 1998; Martin, 1996; Measor et al., 2000; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993, 1998; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999; Rosenthal & Peart, 1996; Whitaker, Miller, May & Levin, 1999; White & DeBlasse, 1992; Wight, 1994).<sup>2</sup> This thesis does not consider young people's 'voices'; but tactically draws them in here as witness to their appropriation into the normalizing machinery of panoptic surveillance over and government of parental and youth subjectivities. Rather than liberation from discourse then, how young people 'receive' (and resist) parental sexual communication is used to hone that communication in order to reduce their resistance to its bottom-line preferred messaging on risk (Coleman & Roker, 1998; also see 'realist reading' in Chapter 1).

This 'child-centred' literature on parental conversations about sex produces some predictable folds, and some surprising twists. First, the so-called 'defensive communication'



with parents was perceived to be produced by parents feeling threatened and embarrassed; and parents covered this by preaching, nagging, patronizing, criticizing, correcting, issuing rules, not asking/listening, interrupting, putting their opinions forward as unchallengeable facts, or getting impatient, irritated or angry (cf. Gibb, 1961). This defensiveness interactively caused adolescents to feel fearful, judged and guarded; so much so that they usually gave up trying to communicate with parents, and sought information and counsel elsewhere. This was construed as a thoroughly negative, thwarting, even damaging thing for adolescents, for which neurotic parents were blamed (Rozema, 1986; Brock & Jennings, 1993).

Instead of this 'defensiveness' then, adolescents desired 'openness' with parents. This was not over-friendliness, intrusive questioning or sharing personal experiences and values; but creation of an environment of 'approachability', 'willingness to listen with an open mind', and 'support' of choices (Croft & Asmussen, 1992; White & DeBlassie, 1992). Typically, girls are represented as wanting to talk about relationships, feelings and sexual decision-making in more intimate and direct ways with their mothers than they mostly did (e.g. Apter, 2004; Brock & Jennings, 1993; Darling & Hicks, 1982; Gavin & Furman, 2000; Lees, 1993; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999; Thompson, 1990). According to the (veiled) psychoanalytic inscriptions of some authors, girls reported modeling their negotiations with first sex partners (seemingly boys/men) on patterns of intimacy with their mothers – with greater/lesser degrees of success depending on the quality of the mother-daughter bond (e.g. Arcana, 1981; Thompson, 1990; Whitaker et al., 1999).

A second strand of adolescents also picked up 'defensiveness' in exchanges with parents, but owned this as their *own* self-protective resistance to parental mistrust, suspicion, interrogation, intrusiveness and inappropriateness. Lupton and Tulloch's (1996, 1998) focus group discussions were with 17-year old, Australian boys and girls. These studies constituted wily adolescent knowledge-agents who pitted sources of expertise against one another – parents, visiting school-counselors, doctors, and media (such as talk-shows/phone-ins) – and weighed up the different usefulness of sexual information they received from each (as benefits) and what they revealed to each (as risks of exposure). Their

preferred sources of in-depth, technically explicit, experiential expertise – particularly related to HIV/Aids, safer sex, and sexual negotiation – were visiting school-counselors (seen as confidential), and abstract systems of media transmission (seen as anonymous).

The resistance of Lupton and Tulloch's young-Australians to 'openness' with parents concerned the 'management' of forced/unwanted sexual disclosures (i.e. exposure and vulnerability) within daily familial routines of parent-skewed authority and power. They found parental communication about sex to be: (a) repetitive of basic biological facts, and uninformed about modern risks and risk-reduction strategies; (b) suspicious and judgemental of their (adolescents') experiences; (c) tactically staged to manoeuvre them into disclosures, and not genuinely 'open'; (d) interspersed with 'yelling' and coercion around other domestic issues; (e) issued from a moralistic perspective on unspecific 'values'; and (f) lodged within parental anecdotes, that were irrelevant to their lives, and (often) downright embarrassing.

### **Children's rights to know, and to protection**

This model of youth as social actors and sexual citizens pivots on risk-avoidance – that is, on their responsibilities for 'protecting' themselves - and thus, children's rights to sexual information and knowledge to enable self-protection (Evans, 1993). Such children's rights also prescribe custodial obligations society and parents are required to adopt towards them. *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* – organized under the auspices of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and ratified by 188 nations, including South Africa (circa 1994) – stipulates a rights-based approach to HIV/Aids, that holds that every child (juridical definition: someone who has not reached legal majority of 18 years of age) has rights to, *inter alia*: (a) information and open communication on health issues, including sexuality and relationships; (b) training in basic survival and life-skills; (c) question and discuss values, morals and ethics; and (d) freely seek information and express their opinions on it (Sloth-Nielsen, 1995). Thus, children's rights to sexual information are entrenched by global charter; and this is decreed against the sticky custodial conviction that sexual information informs or incites sexual activity. I will mention one (classic) example of how

children's rights, adolescent sexuality and risk, evidence-based epidemiological research, public health policies and parenting practices are pulled into a global apparatus of governmental rationality.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) *Global Programme on AIDS* commissioned a systematic review of literature pertaining to the 'relationship' between sexuality education and young people's sexual behaviour (Grunseit, Kippax, Aggleton, Baldo & Slutkin, 1997). As Willig (1999b) sharply points out (in a slightly different context), the intention is to replace the popular parental belief, 'information makes sex', with an evidence-based, expert and 'libertarian' counter-position, 'ignorance makes risky sex'; but, ironically, both positions wish to delay young people's sexual activity until it can be accomplished more safely, later on (p. 111). The WHO review (revealingly) excludes the copious sex Knowledge-Attitudes-Perceptions-Behaviour (KAPB) studies, because of the notoriously poor association between sex knowledge/attitudes and sex behaviour (see Chapter 4); and examines instead 52 intervention studies where behavioural impact analysis of young people not/exposed to sexuality and/or HIV/Aids education was included (i.e. quasi-experimental designs incorporating control groups). Behavioural impact analysis involved measuring 'indicators' of adolescent sexual behaviour, viz. unwanted pregnancy, abortion and birth rates; infection rates with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs); and self-reported sexual activity.

The studies reviewed spanned 1974 to 1995, covered a dizzying variety of programmatic interventions and methodologies, and were selected from America (mostly), Australia, Western Europe and Scandinavia, and (the only developing countries) Thailand and Mexico. Of 52 studies reviewed, 25 reported sex education had *no effect* on sexual activity, pregnancy rates or STDs; 17 reported *delayed* sexual activity, reduced numbers of partners, reduced unplanned pregnancies and STDs; and only 3 reported *increases* of sexual behaviour associated with sex education (Grunseit et al., 1997).

Parental dynamics/inputs were not considered in this meta-analytic review; but it is clear that parents are positioned as an audience to (or target of) the review, and as a part of the custodial web of power - including policy makers, programme managers, teachers, experts,

researchers, etc. - that embeds adolescent sexuality, and shapes/fabricates it in particular ways (cf. Foucault, 1978). Grunseit et al. (1997) thus construe the parental role as promoting adolescent engagement with as many, and as varied, positive sexual influences on their children as possible – including their own (panoptic) influence on appropriate behavioural boundary setting, and monitoring leisure activities.

The responsibilities of professional adults/experts as (truthful) extra-familial '*sex educators*' would seem to have to be set up in relation to roles of parents, as so-called (bungling) '*sexual amateurs*' (cf. Coleman & Roker, 1998). The negotiation of this relationship – between experts, politicians, and teachers on the one hand, and parents on the other – is thus a fraught surface on which various ideological clashes and contradictory discursive positions are played out. I will briefly mention the struggle over curricula of schools-based 'sex education' to make several points here about parental responsibilities, and assumptions about sex communication in the home. I return to these points in Chapter 4 on peculiarly South African experiences.

### 3. CURRICULA STRUGGLES: CONTENT, STYLE, CONDUIT

#### Libertarian-therapeutic sex education

Measor et al. (2000) – from a British perspective - have argued that 'sex education' is customarily defined in terms of disputes over what it ought to be/do (and how); and in more consensual terms of what it has achieved over historical shifts in the last 150 years. This statement of struggle may be read in (related) Foucauldian, and Enlightenment, ways. Foucault first. Frank Mort (1987), for example, has tracked the back and forth genealogy of 'sex education' (in general forms in Britain) through overlaid historicized discursive practices of *moral hygiene* in terms of 'purity'; *bio-medical hygiene* in terms of 'germs' and 'reproductive functions'; and *social hygiene* in terms of racialized eugenics, 'norms of contagion', and population management (see Donzelot, 1980; Foucault, 1978: Chapter 2). This Foucauldian work recognizes sex pedagogization as a salient technique of government, fabricating sexually responsible, self-regulative individuals/citizens as a means to monitor

and 'discipline' a society (e.g. Bell, 1995; Evans, 1993; Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; Patton, 1996; Thorogood, 1992). This mechanism reinforces the centrality of sex and sexuality in the constitution of modern subjectivity, and social control (Foucault, 1978).

Without the twist of Foucault's (1978) repressive hypothesis, other critical commentators on schools-based sex education programmes of the past 30 years have discerned shifts that are understood as unequivocally 'more enlightened', progressive, and liberating (Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Measor et al., 2000; Tonks, 1996; Wyness, 2000). What was widely perceived as an outmoded, *biological (or reproductive) approach* that emphasized physiology and anatomy ('facts of life'), and generally incorporated chastity/abstinence messaging. This has been overwritten – in theory and policy anyway – by contemporaneously dominant *psychological/sociological approaches* to sexuality awareness and 'life-skills'<sup>3</sup> that generally emphasize informed choice, gendered dynamics of sexual coercion and HIV/Aids risk-reduction principles. In everyday micro-practices, schoolteachers – let alone parents – are found to be fumbling and floundering, ill prepared, amidst these institutional shifts (Farquhar, 1991; Lupton & Tulloch, 1996; Wyness, 2000).

Lupton and Tulloch's (1998) Foucauldian reading – of Australian schools-based sex educational policy/practice – finds 'sex education' to be 'a type of sexology directed at... adolescent bodies in the process of being sexual bodies'; with the explicit purpose being to normatively 'train' (or discipline) bodies to responsibly manage sexual desire/pleasure, and to protect themselves against unwanted sexual advances, sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy (p. 22). The constitution of this young (Australian) sexual citizen is thus knowledge- and rights-based; an ideological (or discursive) approach within sex pedagogy that Lupton and Tulloch dub 'libertarian-therapeutic' (following Seidman, 1992).

Seidman's (1992) meticulous genealogy of 'sexual ideologies' in postwar American neo-liberalism posits (among others) a 'libertarian-therapeutic' discourse that inscribes positive sexual expression within age-appropriate limits, and liberated from other repressive social/State constraints, is (therapeutically, beneficently) connected to physical and psychological health, self-fulfillment and personal/social enlightenment (p. 5). Here 'sex'

has multiple meanings/uses other than reproduction - erotic pleasure, leisure activity, intimacy, self-articulation, financial transaction, etc. - which rest on a 'citizen's contract' between consenting individuals of responsible sexual exchange. This implies regulation of sex through 'openness' and 'frank communication', negotiating safer sex, sharing sexual histories with partners, and articulating needs and desires (p. 5). This approach is (allegedly) espoused by the *loveLife* organization in South Africa (see Chapter 4); and its contradictions and slippages haunt my analysis of *Lovelines* in chapters that follow.

The libertarian-therapeutic discourse stands in uneasy relation to what Aggleton (1989) has called 'three rather unhelpful vernaculars' that dominate in/formal talk about sex and sexuality (p. 168). Each privileges penetrative heterosexual ('real') sex above all other kinds of sexualized expression/activity; and circles around sexual desire/pleasure, sexual negotiation, power, and technical/mechanical aspects of risk-reduction in indirect and obfuscatory ways. A key function of these vernaculars is to avoid offensive, controversial, confrontational or embarrassing sexualized topics – and, thus, they are (still) favoured in 'traditional' parent-child conversations about sex, and some school curricula in contexts other than Australia, like Britain (Aggleton, 1989; Willig, 1999b; Wyness, 2000). Aggleton's finding them 'unhelpful' articulates the dominant/global public health policy position, supporting libertarian-therapeutic discourse. Aggleton's (1989) 'unhelpful' vernaculars are (cf. Patton, 1990a, 1995; Seidman, 1992; Willig, 1998, 1999b; Wilton & Aggleton, 1991):

- *Bio-medical*, where heterosexual sex is biologized in terms of ovaries, testes, copulation, reproduction, and possibly, viral contagion and risk-reduction;
- *Spiritual*, where heterosexual sex is construed as 'god's gift to marriage', or divine purposes in life, and is connected to a conservative moral position on chastity, abstinence before marriage, and 'safety' of (unprotected) sex within marriage; and
- *Romantic*, where heterosexual sex is transformed through its coupling to affection, intimacy, love or conjugal monogamy – this apparently to ward off risks of sexual exploitation of women - and sex is postponed while looking for Mr/s Right.

## The ideological/discursive struggle over children's bodies

Against such familiar forms of sex-talk, the 'pro' and 'anti' sex-education-in-schools lobbying of the 1970s and 1980s - as it is figured in writings about British (e.g. Coleman & Roker, 1998; Wyness, 2000), American (e.g. Seidman, 1992) or Australian (e.g. Moore & Rosenthal, 1993) struggles - was an ideological battle over 'control' of the pedagogization of children's sexuality. This battle was drawn between (a) 'liberal' (rights-based) and 'radical' (anti-family) discourses that favoured 'professionalization' of sex education in schools, and (b) 'traditional' (pro-family) discourses that favoured exclusive parental instruction in the home. It is worth briefly unpicking the premises of these discourses, for in contemporary contexts of more/less formal institutionalization of 'libertarian-therapeutic' and 'rights-based' sexuality awareness curricula in schools and media campaigning (see *loveLife* in South Africa, Chapter 4), both impact on how parents are currently positioned to address issues related to sex and sexuality with children at home that 'interface' with other sites of sex implantation.

The anti-sex-education-in-schools argument pivoted on several key ideas about 'nuclear families', children and sex. De-regulated, exclusive parental pedagogization of children's sexuality in the home (1) maintained the 'privacy' of the domestic sphere, and parental rights over and responsibilities for their children; and (2) operated through 'intuitive points' and responsiveness to individual children's developmental needs/situations related to sexuality and sexual knowledge (Lasch, 1977: see Chapter 2). It also (3) acknowledged 'diversity' through provision of situated, culturally sensitive and value-infused sex information, e.g. religious positions, abstinence, fidelity, etc. (Taylor & Ward, 1991). Finally, it resisted a libertarian-therapeutic approach to 'informed choices' through arguing that (4) technical knowledge about sex blurs moral guidelines, and inflames experimentation before children are 'ready' for sex (cf. Winn, Roker & Coleman, 1998).

Given sexual risks in contemporary societies to which (even) young, 'innocent' children are exposed, this pro-family, 'traditionalist' discourse seldom espouses an unequivocal 'ignorance is bliss' position on sex pedagogization - a position (disparagingly) termed 'the

ostrich position' (Moore, Rosenthal & Mitchell, 1996). But anti-information ideas – for example, arguments that modern children are indiscriminately exposed to high levels of explicit, technical information on sexual practices previously considered 'deviant' – resurface in (a) resistances towards the so-called 'morality malaise' or 'anomie of traditional values' around sex/uality in modern western societies; and (b) pointed restatement of doubt that such explicit flows of information have had any discernible (positive, diminishing) effect on risky sexual, or sexist, behaviours (Lees, 1993).

### **Professionalization: safer, erotic, technical registers**

The pro-sex-education-in-schools discourse is lacerated with fractious resistances and diverse positions. Such ideology-critiques and norms-transforming agendas emit, for example, from 'anti-family' and 'children's rights' movements, both actively mobilizing 'social ownership of children' discourses (Burman, 1994; see Chapter 2). They are supportive of institutionalization of sex instruction since, through recourse to extra-familial experts, professionals, role models, and knowledges, children may be freed from the repressive tyrannies of adult sexuality and stultifying sexual socialization of nuclear families (Cooper, 1971; Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; Wyness, 2000). 'Anti-family' approaches wish to uncouple the sexuality/alliance deployments, and normative webs of domestic privatization, consumerism and gendered division of labour, that underpin capitalism (Barrett & McIntosh, 1982).

Thus, feminist criticism, in particular, has forged formidable challenges to the traditional curricula of schools-based 'sex education' (Mort, 1987); and has constructively contributed towards the refashioning of a 'libertarian-therapeutic' approach. The so-called 'female desire feminists' of the 1980s sought to unhitch sex from conventional vernaculars of (heterosexual) reproduction and romance, and to put homosexuality on the agenda (e.g. Diorio, 1985; Fine, 1988; Lenskyj, 1990; Mills, 1988). Fine (1988) argued that (female) 'desire' and 'pleasure' were missing from schools-based sex education programmes; and the continued 'just-say-no' (abstinence) curriculum forged alliances with anti-sex conservatives, and sabotaged girls' sexual decision-making through their ignorance, guilt, lack of skills and



denial of sexual volition, desire or responsibility (cf. Benjamin, 1988; Lesko, 1988; Patton, 1993, 1994, 1996; Thompson, 1990; Willig, 1999b; Wilton, 1992, 1994).

Similar arguments about technical/erotic curricula of (safe) sexual knowledge have resurfaced as a result of the HIV/Aids epidemic, with renewed calls for input of professional expertise. Tonks (1996) finds parents and schoolteachers inept and deficiently skilled in providing young people with usable sex information/skills, because (a) they still hold a binary 'sex versus no-sex' understanding of heterosexual penetrative sex; (b) they have no sexual experience of routine-condom-use; and (c) they are frequently blinded by values. Wilton (1992, 1994) tackles the persistent heterosexist and penetrative curriculum of sex and HIV/Aids education, and emphasizes the crucial idea of a continuum of sexualized activities and understandings of the erotic that require constant, negotiated decision-making between new or established mutually-desiring/desirous partners, rather than the one-off, cataclysmic yes or no that is expected of girls.

Navigating such shifting territories of sex clearly require signposts and maps, and several sexual health activists have explored the (ambivalent) implications of increasingly eroticized information about safer sex practices and techniques (e.g. Patton, 1989, 1996; Watney, 1994; Wilton, 1994, 1997). Quite aside from parental embarrassment at handling these issues in families (see above), schoolteachers report increasing levels of inadequacy, anxiety, embarrassment and moral-flack regarding sex curricula, explicitness of questions and complexity of moral issues they are expected to negotiate in everyday classroom situations (Farquhar, 1991; Lupton & Tulloch, 1996; Wyness, 2000).

Other feminists have warned that such technologies of erotic manoeuvring assume egalitarian statuses of power/knowledge between consenting sexual partners. Thus, this pleasure-advocacy – given that many girls routinely experience sexual coercion and violence from boyfriends - is thus idealistic and irresponsible in a context of elevated risk of sexually transmitted infections (e.g. Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, Sharpe & Thomson, 1990, 1992; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, & Thomson, 1994; Holland & Thomson, 1998; Kippax, Crawford, Waldby & Benton, 1990; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Lear, 1995). These feminists

overlay power relations and assertiveness onto girls' desire-pleasure – rather than disallowing it – which complicates sexual negotiations and renders their processes and outcomes unpredictable and 'unsafe' for girls. While such gendered power-risk issues are considered imperative in campaigns/curricula targeting girls *and* boys, there is dissent in how sexualized inter/subjectivities should be retrained and skilled. For example, Holland and Thomson (1998) argue that the two genders need 'safe spaces' – in single-sex groups, and far away from parents – to articulate (rather different) questions and anxieties; and Mitchell (1998) impels gender-interactive communication practice, where young women and men are skilled to negotiate mutually acceptable decisions/choices *together* about what is right for them at particular sexualized moments.

#### **A tangent/context of sorts: feminists, oppression and Foucauldian power**

Several strands of feminist resistance has inscribed above sections. These arguments extend my unraveling of readings of media discourse in Chapter 1. I take a short step back here – or a step up – to (briefly) demarcate lines of tension between feminist and Foucauldian agendas; and to reiterate the useful work in the hyphen-interstices between them. An example will elaborate this. Heise (1995) has articulated the multiplicity of feminist discourse surrounding (female) sexuality and gender, with respect to feminist resistances to gender-based violence and sexual coercion. The lines of feminist discourse from Heise's 'display matrix' (p. 112, below) map the fractious feminist positions I represented in the previous sections. Her intention was to develop an 'integrated', multi-pronged, feminist approach to sexual violence – incorporating notions of pleasure, risk *and* power inequity:

- *Female desire feminism* is concerned with women's sexual desire, arousal and pleasure – to establish these as equal/different to men's hegemonic signs, and to re-position women as 'agents';
- *Public health feminism* is concerned with specific behaviours (e.g. unprotected sex) that put women's health at risk – to put technology in place to ameliorate risky situations (e.g. life-skills; self-defense or assertiveness training, eroticisation of condom-use, etc.); and

- *Anti-violence feminism* focuses on gender-based power inequities that demean or endanger women – to change contextual norms and practices that oppress and victimize women.

I will explore in later analytical chapters, the (stifling, thwarting) limits of public health feminism's relentlessly optimistic advocacy of 'expert technologies' that – in Foucauldian ways – inflame women's power in particular moments; but hold wider and deeper socio-structural 'end-points' of women's oppression in place. This applies as much to mothers' interpellation as sex-talking subjects, as to girls' avoidance of sex in advanced conditions of HIV/Aids epidemic, as (somewhat risky) risk-safe techniques. The persistent (public health) injunction to girls/women to *insist* on, or *negotiate* condom-use with boys/men is problematized within South African risk conditions.

As I have suggested in Chapter 1, on the surface, Foucault's writings are not easily reconcilable within a feminist agenda of 'ideology critique' (cf. Mills, 1994). McNay (1992) has argued that feminist engagement with Foucault's work has mostly focused on *Discipline and punish* (Foucault, 1977) and *The history of sexuality* (Foucault, 1978). *The history of sexuality* alludes briefly to (inequitable) female hysteria/sexualization (see Chapter 2). But even if Foucault's writings were read as un/wittingly 'gender neutral', they reproduce phallogentric absence of (a) explicitly *female* bodies in relation to power (e.g. Hartsock, 1990; Singer, 1993); and/or (b) explicitly *feminine* disciplinary techniques applied to female/maternal bodies (e.g. Braidotti, 1990, 1991).

At headier theoretical levels, however, others have warned that such calls [(a) and (b) above] risk 'fixing' femaleness or femininity as some kind of (ideologically duped) Other, victimized reality/truth, in the place of constant kaleidoscopic re-signification and re-territorialization (Butler, 1990). Nevertheless, Foucault's idea that sexualities are not innate or natural qualities of bodies, but rather an effect of historically specific power relations, provided tools to chip away at the regulation of women's heterosexual and maternal corporeality within institutionalized (and patriarchal) models of femaleness (e.g. Bartky, 1988; Flax, 1990; Gallop, 1988; Gavey, 1992; Grosz, 1994; Sawicki, 1991). That the body is

seen by Foucault to be produced through power, and is therefore always already social rather than a 'natural' entity, has made a significant contribution to feminist critique of biological essentialism/destiny. McNay's (1992) warning of biological essentialism's binary counterstroke – discursive determinism, in the sense of Foucault's body as passively imprinted on by existing power/discourse, without human capacities to 'be creative', to 'act autonomously' or to 'push back' (p. 12) – appears either to misread Foucauldian notions of 'docility', 'resistance' and later 'subjectification'; or to react against the political immobilization his theory of power and neo-liberal government implies.

Burman (1991b) explains this emancipatory paralysis for feminism in terms of several Foucauldian ideas. (1) A celebration of local operations of power, of difference, dispersal and proliferation take the sting out of structural oppression. (2) Resistance is theorized as swarms of spontaneous resistances at the level of the individual body, rather than collective and directed struggle toward subjective/societal transformation. (3) A relativist stance on truth(s) undermines moral-political impulse, where privileging one reading over another (e.g. exposing 'lies', 'misrepresentations' or 'oppression') becomes analyzable in itself due to reflexivity about positioning, or reification. Thus, Burman (1991b) warns against viewing Foucault's ideas as liberatory in and of themselves; but, rather than dismissal, they need to be put to work in critical analysis of discourses and subject positions, and 'politically appropriated in order to do something' (p. 330).<sup>4</sup>

And so it is. Many feminists have found Foucault's complex capillarization of power and anti-humanist, decentred and fragmented subjectivity appealing, for varieties of inflammatory and (smaller) subversive tasks particularly to unpicking the work of schooling young people's sexualities. For example, a swirling power matrix allows understanding of (a) how gender collides/colludes with other lines of force around sex, class, race, family, colonialism and risk/disease (e.g. Mills, 1996, 1997; Patton, 1992; Stoler, 1995; Swartz, 1997, 1999); (b) how 'causality' becomes multiply over-determined without seeking to indict patriarchs (e.g. Haug, 1987); (c) how micro-practices of everyday living in families are infused with gendered powers (e.g. Dixon & Wetherell, 2004; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Wilbraham, 1997, 1999a, 2002; Wetherell, 1995a); and (d) how multiplicity of subject

positions produces the interstices, contradictions and slippages for sexual subjects to 'latch onto' struggle, contestation and misappropriation (e.g. Flax, 1993; Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1984a, 1989; Tamboukou, 2002, 2003; Walkerdine, 1987a, 1987b).

#### 4. PSY-COMPLEX ADVOCATED MICRO-PRACTICES

The problem with sexual repression is...

Having mapped areas of the tilting discursive geography – and ideological seismic activity – of the territories of parent-child sex pedagogization in the home, some of its micro-practices are now materialized as signposts. Several pivotal ideas about micro-practices of conversations about sex were implicit within this mapping. The 'ideals' as institutionalized sex-talking techniques that appear in various forms for popular audiences - 'know-how-to' manuals, features in women's or parenting magazines, hand-held brochures in clinics – rub and slip against their mis/uses and absences in the real parenting practices described in social scientific and psychological literature, viz. accounts of parents and young people interviewed. The reasons for this (risky) rubbing and slipping of ideals and practices are formulated in at least two (related) ways.

First, 'Enlightenment' is asserted, which, according to Foucault's (1978) repressive hypothesis, inscribes historical shifts as progressively liberating for modern parents and children. Thus, for example, 'history has taught us...' that prohibition, silence, ignorance and punishment are not effective pedagogical strategies (Wyness, 2000). 'Modernization' of techniques has occurred fairly rapidly over 50 years, with changes urgently and imperatively inscribed during times of crisis, social upheaval or sexual epidemic; and 'transformation' of sexual repression is cast as difficult, exposing and embarrassing, slow and requiring constant vigilance/work (Foucault, 1978).

Second, the relation between 'sex-talking techniques' and developmental psychological theory is hazy (implicit) and piecemeal, seeming to deploy fragmented and outmoded ideas to 'explain' both (a) the rationale for the particular childrearing and/or communicative

technique to be applied to the child, and (b) the resistances to application of the technique by parents and by children. Psychoanalysis is often the only theoretical framework that is made explicit to parents in expert counsel (Simanski, 1998); and various forms of psychoanalytic discourse appear as hegemonic lenses through which parent-child interactions are normatively judged in social scientific and public health literature as 'normally problematic' (Rose, 1990). Powerfully then, this sets up (1) the expert imperatives/techniques for parental sex communication with children as foundational truths, (2) the inevitable failure of such techniques due to resistances by parents and by children, and (3) the constant need to re-inscribe recalcitrant parents/parenting to ward off subjective and social risks to/of recalcitrant adolescents. This is understood within Foucault's (1977) 'carceral system' of institutional knowledge; where disciplinary/governmental tactics work inconsistently and partially, thereby inscribing the ongoing need for vigilance and normalization.

The principles and micro-practices that follow are briefly 'situated' within conceptual/ideological frameworks, and this interpretive positioning – making the familiar unfamiliar or vice versa - is largely mine, based on the lenses already provided (above, and in Chapter 2). Referencing is fairly judicious here as such discourses work with composite rather than individualized ideas.

### **The curriculum (how and why and when and what)**

*Tactic 1.* The *one-off Big Talk at puberty* of yore becomes swarming, smaller conversations about sex throughout children's and young people's developmental lives. This is largely inscribed by psychoanalytic discourse: children are sexual beings from birth, and their relationship to/with parents is sexualized; so ongoing talk (and inter-subjective work) is required to inscribe trust, affection, acceptance and intimacy (Chilman, 1990). Talking about sex often, related to ordinary everyday issues as they arise, normalizes it, and defuses guilt.

*Tactic 2. Talking about sex with young people is not easy, but it's worth persevering.* The difficulty and embarrassment associated with talking about sex is widely acknowledged and normalized through recourse to Freudian concepts of Oedipus and Electra Complexes – which brings up libidinal feelings in children and parents, and are repressed out of guilt and anxiety (Simanski, 1998). However, when parental communication with children about sex 'works' – that is, (a) information *plus* (b) discussion *plus* (c) openness *plus* (d) supervision/boundaries – the process offers 'measurable' subjective and social benefits (e.g. psychological well being, improved family functioning, development of self-esteem and confidence, decreased age of first sexual intercourse, increased use of condoms/contraception, etc.). If communication 'fails', 'damages' are repairable through availability of innumerable other sources of sex counsel (e.g. Andre et al., 1989; Lupton & Tulloch, 1998); but Simanski (1998) notes that in American parenting magazines, the most frequent statistics cited in articles on parental sex communication were dire consequences/risks of its failures, viz. (a) prevalence rates of unplanned teenage pregnancy, and (b) 40% of adolescents had had penetrative sex by 15 years of age.

More contemporary HIV/Aids-awareness approaches advise parents to explicitly avoid 'scare tactics' and 'just-say-no' (abstinence) as prohibitions, unless these are critically and reflexively framed as skills-deficient approaches (e.g. Patton, 1990a; Tonks, 1996; Willig, 1999b). Even when talking about sex with adolescents is 'stormy and stressed' with conflict, experts advise keeping lines of communication open; and addressing 'silences', 'embarrassment', 'tension' or 'omissions' directly by acknowledging their 'difficulty', rather than accepting them as 'normal' or hoping they will go away/improve (e.g. Coleman, Catan & Dennison, 1997; Moore & Rosenthal, 1998).

*Tactic 3. Child-centredness.* Within a broadly 'authoritative' parenting style (Baumrind, 1991), 'child-centredness' holds that conversations about sex are 'instigated' by children's / adolescents' questions addressed to parents, who 'tailor' sex information/issues according to developmental levels and situational dynamics. Such interaction is routinely inscribed as 'natural' maternal attunement to children's unique developmental cues and life-world (Croft & Asmussen, 1992); but is more critically recognized as stage-managed and

scaffolded along normative lines (Burman, 1994; Walkerdine, 1984; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). The key parenting technique advocated here is '*askability*' – as in, 'be an askable parent' – measured according to reflective or active listening and communication skills (Croft & Asmussen, 1992, p. 458). These skills/tasks are specified as: praising every question and approach; listening without interrupting; articulating acceptance of the child while dis/agreeing with what the child does/says; extending and elaborating on discussions to build anatomical, emotional and sexual vocabularies; and talking about bodily functions – and the contexts/relationships/issues in which they are embedded – in normalizing ways.

'Child-centredness' is also tactically deployed – in light of (a) perceived spiraling risks to which modern children and young people are routinely exposed, and (b) the modern demands on parents/mothers of juggling familial and professional lives – in renewed calls for vigilance and surveillance over children (Valentine, 1997; Wyness 2000). Thus, parents are advised firstly, to vet and know the whereabouts of their children at all times, and to ensure that they (children) know how/where parents are immediately contactable; and secondly, parents should be on the lookout for 'warning signs', e.g. inappropriate sexual behaviour, drug use, dubious friends, secretive internet activities, etc. (Morgan, 1999). Such warning signs are apparently not excuses for panicky over-reaction with children themselves; but opportunities to beef up parenting skills through professional assistance and input (Rose, 1990).

*Tactic 4. Talking about sex with young people is about more than imparting facts and information about reproductive biology.* This widening of the ambit of 'sex' to encompass 'sexuality' relates to the (psychoanalytically inscribed) centrality of sex and sexuality to modern subjectivity and selfhood (Bell, 1995). It is also inscribed by concomitant institutionalized shifts of sex pedagogization towards 'sexual issues' – feelings, values, power and coercion, appearance, life-skills, assertiveness, risks, etc. (e.g. Chilman, 1990; Lees, 1993; Measor et al., 2000). Drawing on the (effective) techniques of an authoritative parenting style, parents are advised to actively seek out '*teachable moments*' (Baumrind, 1991, p. 71) – issues, experiences, events or transgressions from everyday life that may be insinuated into 'pedagogical discussions' with children about limits, consequences of



transgression, and responsibilities (see Chapter 7). Simanski (1998) notes that American childrearing experts are doubtful of the value of humour as a sex-talking technique – due to risks of misconstrual by young people as ridicule or sarcasm – but advocate a ‘balance of more neutral, light responses, with heavier, more serious responses’ (p. 40).

With the opening out of ‘sex’ as a nexus of discussions – rather than conferral/confirmation of biological information – several ‘techniques’ become apparent. *Be honest* - if parents do not have access to accurate information, or have (or do not have) strong views on an issue, they are best advised to say so (Croft & Asmussen, 1992). *Value-statements* should be conveyed in the first-person possessive sense, as in ‘I believe that...’ (Whatley & Trudell, 1993). *Ignorance is no excuse* – parents are impelled to gather a stash of good reference materials from various sources, and to clarify (from teachers) what is covered, and how, in the schools-based sex education curriculum to which children are exposed (cf. Wyness, 1992).

Furthermore, parents should also refer young people out to other/rival sources of sexual information and registers of sexual experience; they are not ‘sex oracles’ (Thompson, 1990). Patton (1990a) argues that ‘sex pedagogy’ seduces everyone into uncritical, conventionalizing discourse about sex and sexuality. A more useful approach is to use children’s situational issues and direct experiences, and the range of textual materials they have ready access to, to actively ‘teach deconstruction’ – that is, to find the gaps, the contradictory logics and where one stands in relation to this knowledge (p. 110). This is intended to inscribe critical reflexivity towards ‘facts’ that bombard young people from innumerable sources/directions, and their subjective responses to this (cf. Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; Willig, 1999b).

*Tactic 5. Most sexual learning from parents happens through communicative tone, and non-verbal aspects.* Rather than what is directly said between parents and children about sex, most empirical research with adolescents – and with parents on their recollections of their own sexual socialization – has pointed to the pivotal significance of (a) communicative tone (e.g. ‘defensiveness’, ‘awkwardness’, etc.); and (b) non-verbal dimensions related to sex

## CHAPTER 4

### SOUTH AFRICAN DISCOURSES OF HIV/AIDS RISK, MASS MEDIA AND PARENTAL COMMUNICATION ABOUT SEX

#### 1. 'AFRICAN AIDS'

##### South African worlds apart, and HIV/Aids

Previous chapters have laid the path. This thesis connects macro- and micro-practices of government of families, and seeps into Foucauldian nodes of subjectification between (a) psy-complex dicta about 'adolescence' and healthy parenting praxis (particularly, how mothers should talk with young people about sex); and (b) HIV/Aids risk-prevention through persuasive positioning of (motherly, sex-talkative) subjects via mass mediated discourse. Review of several European, American and Australian studies – keystones in this path (e.g. Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; Patton, 1996; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Wilton, 1997) – has marked powers that worked through the striations of class, race, gender, heterosexuality and age. This review-chapter seeks to track these lattice-lines of force within the HIV/Aids epidemic in South Africa – as a postcolonial engagement with Foucault.

HIV/Aids in South Africa operates within a panicky and fractured force field – incorporating widespread criticism of statutory policies and practices, scientific research apparatuses, rival theories as explanatory models, proliferating interventions, disjunctively resourced individuals/communities, divisions between 'public health' (activist) and 'academic' (interpretative) disciplines, and people dying - that renders commentary difficult without caveats and endnotes (cf. Parker, 2005a).<sup>1</sup> The 'otherness' of risk-conditions is distinctively marked. Firstly, in contrast to HIV/Aids in the developed world, the South African epidemic is primarily heterosexually transmitted; the rates of infection in the general population are fairly high; the percentage of HIV+ women and mothers is greater than men; and the age of sexual activation and infection for women is young (Walker & Gilbert, 2002). These epidemiological patterns are accelerated through traditionally acculturated norms of gender relations and sex, and poverty (cf. 'African Aids': e.g. Crewe, 1992; Irwin, Millen &

Fallows, 2003; Oppong & Kalipeni, 2004; Patton, 1990a, 1992; Ratele, 2005; Whiteside, 1993; Whiteside & Sunter, 2000).

Secondly, South Africa is in state of transition following new democratic dispensation in 1994, and destabilizing conditions of rapid social reconstruction. This runs in several directions – Governmental (State) and governmental (Foucauldian). The apartheid-aftermath of historicized social/economic arrangements and institutionalized imbalances has left racialized (now politely called ‘classed’) disparities between rich and poor, a severely challenged public health system, and inequities of access to resources (Campbell, 2003; Walker, Reid & Cornell, 2004; Williams, Gilgen, Campbell, Taljaard & MacPhail, 2000). These socio-political tensions are intensified through mapping the progressive path of the HIV/Aids epidemic in populations, with its overlaid ‘phases’ requiring qualitatively and quantitatively different responses. Thus, Governmental strategies within ‘advanced epidemic’ – that is, high prevalence among a general population (rather than limited to ‘risk groups’), now sickening with Aids – (should) concern the logistics of massive treatment rollout, community-based skills development, home-based care, orphan-support, and destigmatization campaigning (e.g. Allen, 2003; Campbell, 2003; Kelly et al., 2001). These imperatives are written over those of ‘first tier epidemic’: generating awareness to staunch new incidences of HIV-infection. The injunction to mothers to keep children ‘HIV-free’ works in the interstices between these concerns.

Posel (2004) reads Foucauldian governmental tactics within such epidemiological logics. She figures the surging proliferation of representations of sex and sexuality in post-apartheid South African media discourse (including *loveLife* campaigning) as marks of the rights of political, economic and sexual freedom, of progress into global modernity, and of the aspirational lifestyles of upward class mobility – inscribed as ‘an eroticisation of liberation’ (p. 52).<sup>2</sup> Such obsessive (neo-liberal) confession, unbuttoning of prior repression, and subjective sexual joie de vivre (cf. Foucault, 1978), is constantly re-inscribed through juxtaposition by limits, transgressions and imperatives of the HIV/Aids epidemic - alarm about prevalence and risks of infection; ignorance, denial, silence and stigma; and the need for ‘safety’ from sexual menace (from men) and certain death (without antiretroviral

treatment, ART). Thus, the swift swerve into explicit sexualized imagery and 'sexual openness' impel the consumption of safer sex as a disciplinary tactic – both as HIV/Aids risk-avoidance, and as the (raced white, colonial/modern) entrepreneurial self figured through upward class mobility (cf. Ratele, 2005).

This review-chapter does not pretend to navigate the fractious (empirical) territories of HIV/Aids in South Africa. In a more critical way, it seeks to fabricate particular subjective/societal 'contexts' for the rhetorical and subject-positioning analysis of texts and text-consumption that follows. The *Lovelines* texts that anchor this thesis are (a miniscule) part of a broader *loveLife* parenting campaign; and are directed – through distribution in *Fairlady* – at (predominantly white) middle class women who are (mostly) mothers. With this audience in sight, my review circles around the truth effects of two ambivalent constructions. First, youth risk (of HIV/Aids) is figured *both* as universal, and as nuanced by class and context. Second, (white) middle classed families (functionally nuclear), mothering (child-centred), and talking about sex (libertarian-therapeutic) form an implicit alliance with the western psy-complex; and are cast against the colonial 'other' – constantly figured as poor, risk-vulnerable, traditionally acculturated, lacking education and neglectful or authoritarian towards children. All these constructions have implications for the inclusion/exclusion of middle classed audiences of subjects within categories of HIV/Aids risk in didactic media discourse.

Around these focalizing ideas, my review skims surfaces that were 'set up' in Chapters 2 and 3, but will now be contextually and empirically figured. The (perilous) path passes through (1) epidemiological logomachies over prevalence/risk of HIV/Aids among youth and women; (2) limits of mass media persuasion; (3) macro- and micro-practices of familial functioning; (4) intergenerational communication with children about sex/risk; and (5) *loveLife's* mass mediated parenting campaign, *Love them enough to talk about sex*, which sought to 'explain' youth risk (to parents) and thereby, to impel appropriate parental communication about sex in families, as risk-inoculation. My attention to classed/raced risk, and engagement with normalizing truths of the western psy-complex, require brief naming of a postcolonial lens.

## A postcolonial eye/I

This thesis has come upon several resistances to Foucault's ideas, as inflammatory moments. These incorporated disjunctions between realist, feminist and Foucauldian 'reading positions' (Chapter 1 & 3), and Marxist disquiet about 'dispersion of power' and 'disappearance of ideology' in Foucault's micro-practices (Chapter 2; see also Chapter 5). Chapter 2 closed with critical commentary about the implications of Foucault's disciplinary/governmental apparatus in conditions of epidemic, particularly in developing contexts. Neo-liberal hegemony was shown to work, in political theory and so-called New Public Health, in the distances between State-fabrication of the conditions of possibility for reasonable action, and self-governing, autonomous, rational and entrepreneurial subjects. But, the slippages of governmental tactics – as opportunities for perpetual re-normalization – on which Foucault's (1977) disciplinary matrix rests, are thrown into stark relief in ex-colonized and ex-apartheid realities, such as South Africa. 'Resistances' might be incapacitations due to socio-structural/economic conditions of *impossibility* for self-entrepreneurship; and so disruptive and diverse as to seem 'ungovernable'. Parenting practices within adverse conditions of poverty and sexually transmitted epidemic are a case to point.

Mills (1997) takes 'colonialism' as imperial invasion of and settlement in other territories, and supplantation or overlay of local systems of government (e.g. jurisprudence, economy, public health, knowledge-production) with power-dense western institutions (p. 129). 'Post-colonial' uses of discourse theory are 'political' in the sense that they examine and theorize the socio-economic and cultural collisions, racialization, and crises of power, precipitated/exacerbated by such colonialisms (Mills, 1997).<sup>3</sup> Along these lines, several 'post-colonial critiques' have unpacked the tangled lines of force – oppressive *and* beneficent – of imperial psy-complex 'gold standards' that (a) overlay assessments of 'adversity' and 'deficiency' in developing and under-developed contexts of diverse cultures and socio-economic statuses; and (b) underpin well-meaning explanations and interventions to ameliorate 'damage' and 'dysfunction' (e.g. around developmental psychologies of children, parenting and families, see: Airhihenbuwa, 1995; Berry, Mishra & Tripathi, 2003; Bozalek,

1997; S. Burman & Reynolds, 1986; Dawes & Donald, 1994; Donald, Dawes & Louw, 2000; Macleod, 2002; Richter, 1994; Saraswathi, 2003; Wilbraham, 2005).

These are slippery critiques that negotiate complex, sensitive territories. I will sketch two positions that inscribe later arguments. Dawes and Donald (1994) present a *pragmatist position* – that I claim as ‘Foucauldian’ (my labeling not theirs), and adopt – that (a) connects beneficence of (western) developmental psychological knowledges about children’s needs and vulnerabilities, to legal and constitutional frameworks of child protection and children’s rights (cf. Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers, 1992; and see writing on South African psychologies along such lines, e.g. Dawes, 1985, 1994; Macleod, 1999, 2002; L. Swartz, 1996, 1998; Wilbraham, 2005). Dawes and Donald (1994) also (b) warn of cultural relativism that may slip into defense of historicized effects of poverty/deprivation in under-developed contexts rather than so-called acculturated ‘local knowledges’ about childrearing practice. Nevertheless, ‘*Africanist positions*’ are calling up – increasingly stridently, albeit with some measure of nostalgia for imagined pre-colonial, rural/tribal systems of kinship and ‘culture’ – those forms of childrearing praxis displaced, and pathologized, by the western psy-complex machine (e.g. Kasese-Hara, 2002, 2004; Mkhize, 2004; Nsamaneng, 1992, 1994).

These conflicts play out in this thesis with regard to intergenerational communication about sex, and (re-inscribed) parental responsibilities for children’s risk-safety during HIV/Aids epidemic. Ann Stoler (1995) notes the huge impact of Foucault’s (1978) *The history of sexuality* – as the technologies of sexuality that pervaded 19<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois deployments of sex – but relatively little critical engagement with these historical, empirical and/or conceptual ideas within ex-colonized sites. She argues that decades of inter-textual post/colonial studies have ‘moved from delimited concern with colonialism’s heinous consequences for the colonized, to tensions that cut across metropolitan and post-colonial sites of imperial power’ (p. 14-15). In accepting then that ‘the colony’ is not a bounded unit of analysis, Stoler (leaning on Foucault) wonders how examination of power collision/collusion between classes and cultures has been both ‘enabled’ and ‘muffled’ by western psychological ordering (p. 6). She suspects that colonial/racial thinking becomes

enmeshed in the various psychological projects of 'bourgeois selves', 'ideal families', healthy sexualities and risk-safeties, and shape social taxonomies accordingly (p. 9). In her colonial reading of *The history of sexuality*, the pedagogization of children's sexuality becomes (also) the racialization of it (p. 18).

## 2. LOGOMACHIES OF HIV-RISK: PREVALENCE AND PREVENTION

As Foucault (1978) promised, the bio-politics of contagion and containment of HIV/Aids is driven by patterning of statistics gathered from populations – as epidemiological science (see Chapter 2). Statistics of sero-prevalence (numbers of HIV+ diagnosed people at a given time) and incidence (new HIV-infections) in South Africa are manufactured through various (frequently contradictory) data sources and processes, which have specialized uses and rather more obvious abuses and limitations. These sources include antenatal data and clinical case reports from primary health care (public) clinics, cause-of-death notices (cf. Aids mortality rate), actuarial modeling of future incidence/impact based on past and present 'trends', and population surveys.

I will allude to distinctions between antenatal and survey data here. The manufacture of this data is opened up, but my intention is not to interrogate their accuracy per se. Instead, I flag the rhetorical-discursive idea that (higher or lower) statistics are mobilized, wittingly or not, by researchers and activists, to *do* particular things in/with/to purposive awareness campaigning (cf. W. Parker, 2005a, 2005b; Potter, Wetherell & Chitty, 1991). In Foucault's sense, they are 'calculated rationalities for action' (see Chapter 2). I also highlight nodes of convergence between lines of evidence; and how statistics of prevalence/risk break down along lines of gender, age, race/class and context. These ideas are explored further in Chapters 6 and 7.

### **An epidemic of gendered positive bodies**

Several trends and issues lead off from statistics represented in Figures 1 and 2 (overleaf). The State Department of Health's *antenatal data* (Figure 1)<sup>4</sup> produce elevated HIV-

prevalence in all age categories of women, because calculations are based on particular samples of indigent, sexually active, fertile/pregnant women, who did not practice safer sex, and could not afford private doctors.<sup>5</sup> *UNAIDS* (2004) further reports a 24 to 42% 'refusal rate' to be HIV-screened in antenatal clinics in African countries. Such data are also used to estimate prevalence of an allied epidemic, 'teenage pregnancy' – whether these pregnancies were said to be 'wanted', or not (e.g. Dorrington & Johnson, 2002; Macleod, 1999). In 2004, young women aged 15-19 years constituted 19.5% of the total population of women utilizing antenatal clinics, nationally (Department of Health, 2005).<sup>6</sup> These caveats render antenatal data problematic in general population estimates, although this is frequently done (see Chapters 6 & 7).

*The Nelson Mandela / HSRC Study of HIV/Aids* (Shishana & Simbayi, 2002) – a stratified household survey (see Figure 2)<sup>7</sup> – estimated overall HIV-prevalence in the national population to stand at 11.4%; and in the age group 15-49 years, 15.6% tested HIV+. This prevalence statistic in the age category 15-49 years was shown to vary (a) by *gender*, with 17.7% women testing HIV+ as against 12.8% men, and (b) by *race*, with 18.4% Africans testing HIV+, 6.2% whites, 6.6% Coloureds and 1.8% Indians (Simbayi, Chauveau & Shishana, 2004). No data was available that crossed gender by race.

Such racialized apartheid-nomenclature sticks fast to perceptions of high/low 'risk groups'; to African (and poorer) women being more vulnerable to HIV-infection; and to how particular groups may be targeted (as risky) or eclipsed (as risk-safe) within purposive risk-reduction interventions. It would appear that the risk-safety of white and/or middle classed women depends on risk-saturation of 'others'; and in South African discourses this risk tends to be 'acculturated' and 'classed-poor', rather than simply raced. Women's higher biological risk of contracting HIV/Aids – and their positioning within Aids discourse as 'invisibles', or as 'infectors', 'victims', and 'caregivers' – is well documented internationally (for review and discussion, see J. Kitzinger, 1994; Patton, 1993, 1994; Richardson, 1990; Squire, 1993). But African women's risks of infection are entrenched through cultural practices *and* poverty, that include social pressures to prove fecundity, 'dry sex' techniques, transactional sex, economic dependence on partners/fathers, non-dialogical norms of



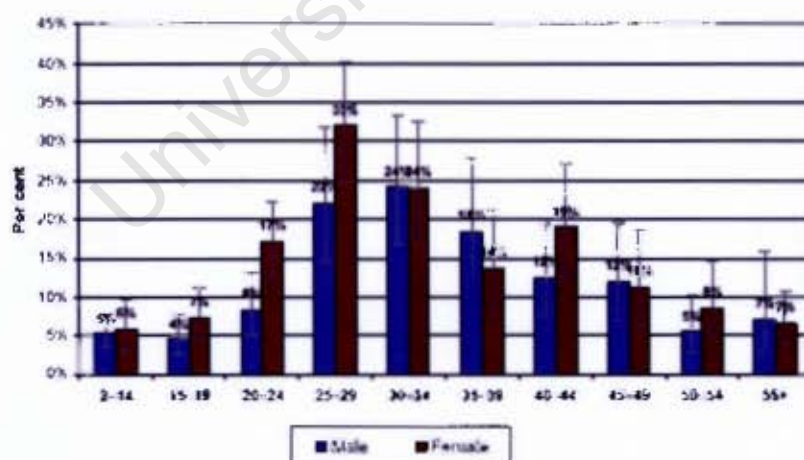
**Figure 1: HIV prevalence (%) of pregnant women attending public antenatal clinics**

Source: *National HIV and syphilis antenatal sero-prevalence surveys in South Africa - Department of Health, Pretoria, 2000 – 2003* (cited in Health Systems Trust, 2005)

	<20 years	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	>40 years
<b>2000</b>	16.1%	29.1%	30.6%	23.3%	15.8%	11.0%
<b>2001</b>	15.4%	28.4%	31.4%	25.6%	19.3%	9.8%
<b>2002</b>	14.8%	29.1%	34.5%	29.5%	19.8%	17.2%
<b>2003</b>	15.8%	30.3%	35.4%	30.9%	23.4%	15.8%

**Figure 2: HIV prevalence by sex and age, national population survey 2002**

Source: *Nelson Mandela / HSRC study of HIV/ Aids – South African national HIV prevalence, behavioral risks and mass media household survey 2002* (Shishana & Simbayi, 2002, p. 20)



adolescents (cf. Kelly, 2000). The *Lovelines* series in *Fairlady* claims to focus on adult women's, and adolescents', sexual risks (see Chapter 6).

The relentless focus on youth suggests then that HIV-prevalence and teenage pregnancy statistics might be used as a form of 'crisis-mongering'. For example, to set up a sense of emergency to justify particular research/interventions, to infer that youth are not responding positively to existing interventions, or to create panic through solicitous citation of spiraling new infections in particular sectors and thereby to neglect positive responses in others (Kelly et al., 2001; Parker, 2003, 2005a). The notion of 'moral panic' refers to tactics of government in which scientific and media representations participate through amplifying deviancy, failure to respond to reasonable interventions and hence 'crisis', to legitimize regulatory restriction by authorities (e.g. Cohen, 1972; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts, 1978; Miller et al., 1998; Squire, 1997). I return to this notion as it pertains to *parenting youth* for risk-safety in Chapters 6 and 9.

It is also true that national HIV/Aids campaigns may look to youth HIV-prevalence statistics as broad evaluative 'social indicators' for success or failure of their messaging about behavioural risk/change. For example, the marginal 'drop' in HIV-infections in the 2000-2002 antenatal data for young women under 20 years (from 16.1% to 14.8%: Figure 1) was said to have precipitated bitter wrangling between national media campaigners over 'who would get credit for this achievement, and in turn, who might get a piece of the massive international funding<sup>8</sup> to fight new fronts of the HIV-plague in South Africa' (Masland, 2002, p. 13). Such mono-causal premises inscribe the 'media effects' traditions within mass communication theory, which sought (variously) to understand the relationship between purposive messaging and its (positive) demonstrable impact on an audience's knowledge, attitudes or behaviour (e.g. Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001; Newbold, 1995).

### **Risky young bodies/psyches: the KAPB machine**

Epidemiological science also maps populations in search of factors that inhibit/enable risk-safe action. Social scientific South African writings about youth risk of HIV/Aids – as

opposed to public health literatures - have bemoaned the glut of descriptive, quantitative *KAPB* and *KAP* surveys<sup>9</sup> that fabricate youth as a niche audience of risky, sexy and otherwise deficient subjects (e.g. Campbell & MacPhail, 2003a; Frizelle, 2005; Harrison, 2005; Kelly et al., 2001; MacPhail, 1998; Wilbraham, 2002). While these elements of cognition – knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions - are blurry in situated thinking and sexual practice, the interrelations between them as ‘variables’ or ‘factors’ is theorized by a North American behavioural science tradition that incorporates proliferating ‘outcome-oriented’ theories of behaviour change (Kelly et al., 2001, p. 20-1; see DiClemente, Crosby & Kegler, 2002, for review of this tradition; also see Chapter 1).

The outcome/effects orientation inscribes quasi-experimental research designs that (1) use standardized forced choice response formats to measure and correlate variables; (2) measure variables before and after interventions to establish changes as ‘causal effects’; and (3) measure effects of cognition on behavioural indicators (MacPhail, 1998). Thus, *inaccurate* knowledge about HIV/Aids is causally associated with *wrong* action (unprotected sex); and *accurate* knowledge - implanted by Intervention X (e.g. parental communication about sex/risk) – is assumed to lead to *right* action (abstinence, condom use). I return to the social flaws in this positivist fiction below.

The (endless) empirical mapping of the sexualized territories of youthful *KAPB* surveys in South African HIV/Aids discourse is so relentless, repetitive and recognizable that I have excised my detailed literature review, and offer it as Appendix 3 (see substantive reviews in Kelly et al., 2001; Harrison, 2005).<sup>10</sup> I present instead a few bulleted, composite points below, and move on to consider ‘truth effects’, such as how youth are figured within such constructions; and critical implications of this positioning for responsible sexual action, and custodial communication with mothers about sex. But there are risks (and losses) associated with such manoeuvres of excision, displacement and bulleted truths. *KAPB* surveys reveal few if any insights into situated minutiae of lived experience and action (Campbell, 2003). However, my (genealogical) review worked to ‘position’ empirical findings (a) within the historical and community contexts from which they were plucked by probability sampling; and (b) within contested territories with ‘other’ empirical findings (produced through rival

methodologies). Predictably, contested territories concerned the sexualized *activities* of young people (rather than agreement about their faulty knowledge or perceptions); and I conclude with such an amplificatory contestation before moving on to truth effects.

1. *Knowledge* is measured as hegemonic bio-medical understandings. Most young people glean information about sex, safer sex and HIV/Aids from media, friends and older siblings. There were differences in knowledge-levels between younger and older adolescents; and between those who lived in urban/resourced and rural/poorer environments. Overall, they demonstrated accurate, abstract knowledge; but lacked clarity on more nuanced aspects of risk, technical skills with regards risk-reduction, and applied/embodied knowledges about themselves.
2. *Mistaken beliefs and misperceptions* are taken as understandings counter to bio-medical discourse. 'Aids-myths' were mentioned, but it was unclear whether such beliefs would motivate behaviour (e.g. sex with a virgin cures Aids). Young people in all contexts – following international trends – (a) under-estimated their risk exposure, and (b) excluded their risky behaviour (e.g. unprotected sex) from established risk categories. Their own sexual relationships were constructed as 'risk-safe'; and risk was associated with people outside their familiar social networks, and with stereotypical risk-groups.
3. *Sexual behaviour and practice*. Age of sexual activation varied across classed/aculturated and rural/urban contexts, and gender; with national median ages (in self-report studies) at 15.5 years for boys, and 16.5 years for girls. A non-dialogical approach to sex was normative in poorer/rural contexts, with most girls describing sexual coercion by older boys/men, or transactional sex for material reward. In Kelly's (2000) study of varying sentinel sites, about 50% of young people under-16 years had had some kind of sexualized experience, but sex was irregular until partnership was established; periods of secondary abstinence were common; and condom-use varied according to context (e.g.

access to condoms, social class, peer cultures) – 25% reported condom-use in rural/poor sites, 75% in some urban sites.

My contextualization of the age of sexual activation is motivated by frequent citation of ever-diminishing ages of 'sex debut' in South African media discourse (see Chapter 6). The median age of first penetrative (heterosexual) sex, 16 years, confers with statistics from other developing and some developed contexts (Harrison, 2005; Hartell, 2005; Kelly et al., 2001). However, in poorer/rural communities in South Africa, it is not uncommon for up to 25% of youth to have had sex at least once by 12-13 years old (Kelly, 2000); with more isolated reports of (unspecified) sex at 9-10 years old (Campbell & MacPhail, 2003a; LeClerc-Madlala, 2002b, 2003). Such studies implicitly skirt sexual abuse and rape of children by older adolescents or adults (Dorrington & Johnson, 2002), but clearly identify age-gaps between sexual partners as a risk factor for sexual coercion, particularly in the differentials of power related to transactional sex between younger girls and older boys/men (Kelly, 2000; Parker, 2004). Thus, younger ages of sexual activation are associated with higher/longer sexual risk patterns due to lack of knowledge/power, unprotected sex and poor negotiation skills (Harrison, 2005).

But this issue is also powerfully connected to methodological flaws in such surveillance of 'sex' in decontextualized ways (cf. Warwick & Aggleton, 1990); and also to perceptions about 'inadequate parental supervision' of children. In qualitatively accounting for their first/subsequent sexual experiences in a deep rural area, Ntlabati, Kelly and Mankayi (2001) found that Xhosa participants (1) perceived the age of first-time sex to have decreased rapidly in living memory, as a result of 'modernization' and concomitant erosion of cultural regulatory systems; (2) were unclear about what 'sex' meant as forms of penetration and 'thigh sex' were ritually involved in childhood games; and (3) evoked high degrees of freedom, space and leisure to pursue sexualized activities – that is, a lack of parental communication about sex, or custodial monitoring. Regularly sexually active women in this study (4) resorted at some point to injectable hormonal contraception (available at public clinics) rather than having to first acquire a supply of condoms and then negotiate their use (as a contraceptive *and* HIV-barrier method) within hegemonic acculturated norms of

unprotected sex (cf. Kelly & Ntlabati, 2002; see also Zulu sex practices in rural areas: Harrison, Xaba & Kunene, 2001).

### **Immature thinkers, warriors, entrepreneurs**

Critical writings about South African KAPB surveys have variously tackled their descriptive research premises that lack incisive analysis of situated action; their theoretical paucity, fragmentation and asocial proliferation of individuated cognitive models of persuasion and reasoned/reasonable sexual practice; and the ideological (and pragmatic) implications of figuring youth as 'immature' and 'deficient' in terms of the western/global storm-and-stress model of adolescence (e.g. Campbell & MacPhail, 2003a; Frizelle, 2005; Kelly et al., 2001; MacPhail, 1998; Usdin, 1998; Wilbraham, 2002). I will briefly allude to these critiques against other representations of South African youth.

As I have suggested above, KAPB surveys do not systematically contextualize 'social factors' – such as gendered or racialized disparities of power – in lived sexual practice in terms of age, class, culture, families, locality, educational opportunities, and access to resources and services. Kelly et al. (2001) identify *context* and *class* as major determinants of risk-reduction for youth *and* adults – thus, not what is 'inside' people's heads, but what is 'outside' them in the raced/classed sites they occupy and in which sex is deployed, negotiated and practiced (cf. Kelly & Parker, 2001a, 2001b).<sup>11</sup> This view finds 'sexual activities of youth' as complex negotiations of identities and practices that are situated within particular discursive and social matrices that dis/enable reasoned choices in distinctive ways (Campbell & MacPhail, 2003a; Frizelle, 2005, MacPhail, 1998).

This powerfully evokes risk of HIV/Aids in South Africa as 'niche-ed' and patchy, and speaks to the need for nuanced interventions that (a) engage with norms in pragmatic, participatory, skills-based and situated ways to enable healthier action, and (b) acknowledge, support and sustain 'positive and non-risky practices already in place that do not need to change' (Kelly et al., 2001, p. 33). There is growing social scientific support of this movement away from KAPB surveys and allied 'generic factual information', one-size-

fits-all, interventions (e.g. Bhana, et al., 2004; Campbell & MacPhail, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Campbell & Williams, 1998; Kelly et al., 2001; LeClerc-Madlala, 2002b; MacPhail, 1998; Mathews, 2005; Usdin, 1998). These ideas are also implicated in jaundiced or proscribed views, in South African social scientific writing, of the value of mass mediated discourse in persuading situated action/skills (see below).

Although it is true that South African public health research draws eclectically on different health behaviour change models (see review: Airhihenbuwa & Collins, 2000), individualistic, rational decision-making (cognitive) models still underlay its evidence-based 'success' or 'failure' evaluations (Mathews, 2005). The KAPB industry rests then on deficit models of youth development to describe young people's sexual risk, and then explain their inadequate (either passive or deviant) responses to it (Eaton, Flisher & Aaro, 2003). For example, that young people consistently under-estimate their risk-exposure (e.g. Reddy et al., 2003) is widely understood in terms of the western cognitive-developmental psy-complex to be due to immature exaggeration of personal invulnerability to risk, as in: 'I know, but that won't happen to me!' (cf. Elkind, 1985). Such reasoning is conceived as a function of egocentric thinking and inadequately developed perspective taking and reflexivity, before (inexorably rational) formal operational thought holds sway in all life situations outside the school science laboratory.<sup>12</sup>

But local critics have objected to the recycled figuration of *all* young people in HIV/Aids research in terms of the biological reductionism of the globally hegemonic storm-and-stress model of adolescence (see Chapter 1): particularly as hormonally driven towards sexual opportunism, incapable of clear thinking, unable to manage relationships with others, or irresponsible risk-takers (e.g. Campbell, Foulis, Maimane & Sibayi, 2005; Crewe, 2002; Frizelle, 2005; Kelly et al., 2001; Wilbraham, 2002). The casting of adolescence as an immature, vulnerable 'phase' en route to sorted-out, stable, mature and risk-safe adulthood homogenizes and fictionalizes both subject positions (adolescent and adult) in terms of the western psy-complex (Frizelle, 2005). It also fabricates the particular kinds of power-filled, inter-subjective relationships between reckless/feckless adolescents and the adults as authorities who must oversee them (Wilbraham, 2002). Such positioning implicates

imperatives for custodial praxis. For example, (a) young people need to be communicated with by parents (about sex) in particular ways, and closely monitored, to save them from their risky 'sexual natures' (Wyn & White, 1997); and (b) interventions targeting youth need to become increasingly sophisticated, entertaining, engaging or participatory to 'reach' (and persuade) recalcitrant or unresponsive youth, to harness them in (Patton, 1996).

The inappropriate inscription of South African youth by storm-and-stress discourse appears in other ways that interrogate (rather than rely on) adult authority. Historical readings of the shifting representations of South African youth have found active, resilient, adaptable identities. For example, within the space of 30 years, images of African youth have transmogrified from 'Young Lions', as warriors in the struggle against apartheid, to 'Young Entrepreneurs', as competitive, upwardly mobile 'branded selves' within a new dispensation of neo-liberal capitalism (e.g. Bertelsen, 1997; Stevens & Lockhat, 1997). Dawes (1994) warns of the naivete of such 'postmodern' readings of youth power. First, the political activation of (some, not all) youth during 1970s and 1980s through mobilization of revolutionary 'youth-culture' models in South Africa (see Chapter 1), worked as a buffer against the adversities of apartheid; but undermined family and pedagogical systems of support and authority for youth, and they turned to peer-culture participation for counsel, reference and recognition (cf. Campbell, 1990, 1994, 1997). Second, contemporary African youth are now impelled to function as competitive and self-governing 'entrepreneurs' without equal recourse to strongly classed/racialized resources, services and opportunities (cf. Macleod, 2002).

Traces of these historical processes of 'struggle' and 'revolution' (implicitly) underpin many of the calls for peer-driven, community-mobilization approaches to risk-reduction, with critical consciousness as proliferating outcome/s (e.g. Campbell & MacPhail, 2002, 2003b). In this active vein, Crewe (2002) argues that risky constructions of adolescence as a sexually incontinent and immature-thinking 'problem', insult, infantilize, scare and ultimately bore young people to death through apathy, denial and social paralysis. Thus, young people should be remobilized as commentators, problem-solvers, activists, watch-dogs and warriors in HIV/Aids discourse as the new site of struggle with risk, challenge of prejudice and



stigma, social development to manage poverty, and shoring up identity constructions focused on individual *and* societal well being and care (cf. Frizelle, 2005). I return to the uneasy place of parental conversations about sex within activist 'youth-culture' discourses below (see also Chapter 7).

### 3. LIMITS OF MASS MEDIA PERSUASION IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### Epistemological politics and effects-police

South Africa – relative to other developing contexts – has sophisticated technological and semiotic media-machinery for mass communication around HIV/Aids; although media-reach and media-literacy segments audiences along socio-economic and other demographic lines (Kelly et al., 2001). In health promotion or public health discourse, it is normative to distinguish between so-called '*spontaneous*' coverage of issues related to HIV/Aids, such as in soap operas or images in newspapers; and so-called '*purposive*' campaigns/interventions that deploy tried-and-tested mediated messaging, driven by theories and strategies, to demonstrate changed health behaviours (e.g. Airhihenbuwa & Collis, 2000; Coulson, 2002; DiClemente et al., 2002; Mathews, 2005; Naidoo & Wills, 2000). This division tends thereafter to usher in distinctive disciplinary genres of analysis of 'media effects' on audiences, viz. (a) various kinds of 'academic' readership theories about representations (e.g. oppressive ideological work, Othering, semiotic insurgency); versus (b) public health 'activist' evaluations of reach, recall, and behavioural indicators of use/impact of information. Such disciplinary division also reproduces folds between 'sharp' (theoretical interpretive) and 'slack' (audience-reception) readings respectively (Wicomb, 1994; see Chapter 1).

As I suggested in Chapter 1, this thesis deliberately crosses orders of media discourse – producing 'sharp' and 'slack' readings of *Lovelines*, as a didactic textual series on HIV/Aids risk and parenting youth that was part of a particular purposive national media campaign (*loveLife's Love them enough to talk about sex*), and distributed in a women's magazine (*Fairlady*). I have also argued that my work was inscribed by Wilton's (1997) deconstruction

of representational practices in (British) health education brochures about safer sex. Her 'looking at pictures in a crisis' was justified through (unspecific) theoretical understandings of texts constituting social contexts and gendered/sexual identities that impacted on the HIV/Aids epidemic (p. 6); and aimed at suggesting ways to change such brochures/texts, *not* to improve persuasiveness per se, but to resist their 'intersecting oppressions' (p. 10) (cf. Treichler, 1999). This thesis (differently to Wilton) reads how rhetorical persuasion and subject positioning work as governmental tactics invoking disciplinary power.

This section briefly addresses the tangled epistemological politics around didactic media discourse in a peculiarly *South African* HIV/Aids epidemic; and bravely tries to 'position' my own writing within, between or against other warring work on media effects. The tension appears as follows. A (Foucauldian) post-structuralist position remains suspicious of the fiction of instrumental/subjective control over discourse practices implied in the 'intentional' encoding of purposive campaigning; and of (ever) producing perfect, puppet-like, preferred decoding as wholesale persuasion (cf. Fairclough, 1995a; Hall, 1997; Neveldine, 1998). Subjection is precariously negotiated, often implicating patchy buy-in *and* partial disobedience, and the need for constant re-inscription (Foucault, 1977). Thus, readership and representational theories – such as 'feminist' or 'Foucauldian' readings I set out in Chapter 1 - occupy a marginal place in an age of epidemic in South Africa (Parker, 2005a), where 'faulty messaging' is rather urgently coupled with (causing) 'stupid sex' and possible death. Along similar lines, I alluded (in Chapter 3) to the place of 'public health feminism' in an epidemic, where an instrumental approach to ameliorating risky situations/behaviour quickly takes precedence over ideology critique or wide-reaching normative changes (Heise, 1995).

#### **Academics reading texts in an epidemic: fiddling while Rome burns?**

This marginalization of readership/representation theories appears to work along two 'scientific' axes (as discourses or paradigms) that police talk about persuasiveness. (1) Hegemonic public health discourse circles around 'fixing media products' in order that they demonstrably change risky behaviour (Mathews, 2005). (2) More critical social scientific

discourse interrogates the usefulness of (generic information-based) mass media discourse in conditions of advanced epidemic; and turns instead to multi-faceted, niche-community and skills-based, participatory interventions that produce compound effects (e.g. Bhana et al., 2004; Campbell, 2003; Kelly et al., 2001; Frizelle, 2005). Parker (2005a, 2005b) understands the power/positioning dynamics inherent in claims-making about 'effects' as rivalry between campaigns, now directly competing for shrinking funding; and as technologies of dominance to position particular interventions, and evaluations, as worthier (or more effective) than others. I return to these discourses below; but briefly mention South African studies that have read representations first.

The social constructionist understanding of HIV/Aids as 'an epidemic of signification' (Treichler, 1988, 1999), is well documented. Here, words, images, discourses and concepts used to describe or account for HIV/Aids constitute it as a particular phenomenon (cf. Potter & Wetherell, 1987).<sup>13</sup> Such 'spontaneous' communications of HIV/Aids - sans explicit 'strategic' behaviour change agenda (Stein, 2001, 2002) - are understood to inscribe cultural, subjective and emotional responses to perceived risks of infection, and to illness itself (e.g. Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001; Joffe, 1999; Sontag, 1989; Squire, 1997). There are numerous descriptive studies of (obviously 'worrying', possibly 'scare-mongering') *misrepresentations* in South African media discourse; although it is not always clear how and why such (ideological) 'distortion' occurs, or whether audiences of subjects are duped or persuaded by it (cf. Stevenson, 1995; Wicomb, 1994). Nevertheless, these misrepresentations constitute the broad semiotic (and corrosive, panicky) surfaces on which corrective didactic communications are overlaid, and must be negotiated.

For example, Strebel (1997) found 'the language of Aids' in newspaper reportage 'alarmist', working through (a) quantification rhetoric to suggest an 'out-of-control' epidemic; (b) tragic stories of hopeless/innocent victims to suggest 'injustice' and 'fatality'; and (c) emotive descriptors such as 'frightening', 'crisis' and 'plague' (cf. Stein, 2002). Cullinan (2001) reads similar hopelessness in the hyped-up news coverage of the 'Aids-denialism' of the South African Government - powerfully reproducing confusion about ART rollouts and perceptions of a public health system in shambles. Connelly and Macleod (2003) find

militaristic metaphors in newspapers fabricating 'the fight against Aids', with State as (distant) commanding officer, and ordinary people 'dying on the battlefield'. Media reportage was supported by images that coupled (a) blackness (race) to hyper-sexuality (e.g. Patton, 1992; Posel, 1994; Ratele, 2005), and (b) HIV/Aids to blackness, poverty and over-population (e.g. Davis, 2002; Irwin et al., 2003; Oppong & Kalipeni, 2004).

I could trace no South African academic writing on representations of HIV/Aids, or on risk-proofing children within an epidemic, focusing on local women's magazines.

Fairly recently, social theory, humanities and literary studies writings on aspects of purposive media campaigning around HIV/Aids – for example, as sharp/close analyses of semiotic operations and ideological effects of didactic, public domain texts - has begun to appear in academic journals. Such writings follow a broadly discursive view of texts as representational practices that fabricate systems of knowledge or belief, social/power relationships, and identities (as positions) that might be taken up (cf. Fairclough, 1995a; Wilton, 1997). While akin to my own work on subjective/societal effects of media discourse in praxis, these studies tapped disparate domains. For example, Posel (2004) and Ratele (2005) tackled racialized representations of sex, sexuality, sexology and safer sex in a 'New South African Struggle' against HIV/Aids – incorporating snippets of scientific research, sex manuals, billboards, letters to newspapers, advertisements (in cultural studies mode). With more sustained attention to particular texts, Delate (2001) and Thomas (2004) thrash/trash *loveLife's* 'controversial' billboards (see below); and Smith (2003) is aghast at the taken-for-granted (black) racialization of gender violence in a televised 'edutainment' series, *Yizo yizo*.

This criticism – as is my own - is noteworthy in its alterity; that is, written 'outside' of campaigns that produced it (see below), given another reality, read against the grain. Not all journals/audiences are as welcoming (or understanding) of such analyses of discursive effects. My own experience illustrates the sensitivity of criticizing such campaigning in public health forums, where this criticism is perceived not to legitimately constitute so-called 'authorized' (contracted) formal evaluation. *AIDS Bulletin* – the institutional public health

journal of the *Medical Research Council of South Africa* (where I was employed at the time) - would not publish my article on problems with mediated health education materials for parents talking to children about sex (Wilbraham, 2002), unless it was framed without explicit reference to *loveLife* or *loveLife's* texts in quoted extracts. This was, the editor assured me, to 'protect' author (me), journal, and *Medical Research Council*, from litigation-acrimony with *loveLife*. I made the changes.

### **Purposive media campaigning (and persuasion) gets a lot more complex**

I cannot and will not encompass the technical details of mass communication within the blizzard of purposive campaigning around HIV/Aids in South Africa. These purposive campaigns, functioning at national, provincial, municipal and/or local levels, incorporate varying amounts and forms of mass mediated messaging (Kelly et al., 2001). My intention is to widen the lens slightly to expose (other) 'scientific' discourses about how persuasive effects are produced and evaluated. This sketches broad-strokes of difference from, and critical audiences to, my own work within the peculiar politics of 'reading media discourse' in South Africa's risk-dense contexts. Perversely, I appropriate (and re-channel) some of the alterity at various analytical moments in following chapters. Aspects of the *loveLife* campaign are introduced here, and returned to in the concluding section of this chapter.

Purposive campaigning is instrumentally defined as 'input for output' – input information, to output behaviour change (Naidoo & Wills, 2000). This definition draws on foundational assumptions about health communication that determine deliberate strategies and research designs to establish baseline levels, encoding-pretesting-re-encoding materials development cycles, and measurement of pre-defined indicators after roll-out (Coulson, 2002).<sup>14</sup> Theory-led evaluations – typically adopting individualistic, rational decision-making models (see above) – routinely measure indices of behaviour change. As I suggested in Chapter 1, such evaluation traditionally includes considering (a) the *accessibility* of messaging to targeted audiences in terms of its (clarity of) *content*, and '*reach*' through particular channels (radio, magazines, billboards); and then (b) the *capacities of the message-receiver* to translate

messaging into right action, *intrinsically* (via comprehension or readiness to change) and *extrinsically* (via social support or normative pressure) (Usdin, 1998).

Mass media communication interventions are notoriously expensive, requiring constant funding augmentation and additional mediated elements to add depth and sustain interest. Thus, Kelly et al. (2001) further emphasize a (c) cost-benefit analysis, where inputs ('media-spend') are interrogated against outputs (size of target audience, degree of behavioural impact, sustainability) in critical ways that investigate whether resources were wisely spent, or might be utilized in more productive ways. Rather than evaluating narrowly defined, one-off media events/texts, such evaluations have become massive apparatuses of science, economics and 'spin-doctoring' as multi-leveled, complex interventions (and health education media agencies) expand. 'National media campaigns' – such as *Beyond Awareness*, *loveLife* or *Soul City* – incorporate intricate overlays of various inter-textual forms, facets and flows of mass media communications and community-outreach elements, strategically fabricating a 'contextual communications matrix' (Coulson, 2002, p. 3).<sup>15</sup>

For example, *loveLife*'s CEO repeatedly reiterates – in defense of *loveLife*'s exorbitant media-budget (see more below) – that *loveLife*'s 'mass media strategy' should be located within the context of wider campaigning, committed to instructional support, service delivery and outreach activities, in line with multi-faceted intervention designs inscribed by the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* (D. Harrison, 2002a & 2002b).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, mass mediated interventions around a branded lifestyle concept, '*talk about it [sex]*', are 'used strategically' to advertise/invite participation within the other *loveLife*-branded programmes and practices (Stadler & Hlongwa, 2002). *loveLife*'s campaigning incorporates several low-key parent-targeted elements focused on inter-generational communication about sex with children – the *Love them enough to talk about sex* campaign that included the *Lovelines* series (see below) – but is mainly directed at youth (12-17 years old), incorporating:

- **Media elements**, such as conventional advertising (e.g. branded clothing/lifestyle); outdoor-media (e.g. billboards); print media (e.g. supplements, articles in newspapers)

and magazines); and broadcast media (e.g. programming on national radio and television networks);

- ❑ **Services**, such as the *National Adolescent Friendly Clinic Initiative [NAFCI]*, the *thethaJunction* and *Parentline* toll-free help-lines, and an interactive website;
- ❑ **Community-based outreach activities**, such as a peer-led *GroundBreakers* programme in schools; franchised *Y-Centres* in disadvantaged communities; the *LoveGames* sports events; and a roving *LoveTrain* that visits hard-to-reach areas, supplying information and reproductive health clinic services.

Evaluation of such high-profile, multi-faceted, media-flowing campaigns proceeds in *campaign- or programme-specific* ways, usually undertaken by in-house (or within consortium partnerships) research teams, through co-relating branded components to particular indicators of behavioural change (Coulson, 2002; Kelly et al., 2001; Usdin, 1998). *Loveline*, for example, causally connects (hopefully increasing) 'loveLife brand awareness' with (hopefully decreasing) national statistics of HIV-prevalence and pregnancy amongst youth (e.g. D. Harrison, 2002a; loveLife, 2002a, 2003, 2004; Pettifor et al., 2004; Stadler, 2001; Stadler & Hlongwa, 2002). I return to the issue of 'branding' (information, lifestyles, effects) below.

Kelly et al. (2001) raise two concerns with such brand-specific evaluations that relate to occlusion of *how* (theoretically, pragmatically) media work to persuade subjects in dense and fractious risk/media environments. Firstly, branding knowledge/action intentionally fences off compound or accruing effects of the wider 'mediating environment', i.e. overlaid/parallel messaging. In diverse communities, people may (or equally likely, may not) be exposed to layered facets of analogous or competitive risk-reduction interventions, and forms of mass communication about HIV/Aids, simultaneously. Mono-causal narratives – that *Brand-X-campaign* 'caused' increased condom-use (p. 41) – are thus highly problematic. But, secondly, given massive, cutthroat inter/national funding inputs, campaign-specific evaluations are driven to demonstrate beneficent impacts of their branded interventions, and quickly. This tends to either (a) over-estimate what mass mediated communications can do; or (b) under-estimation, through dismissal of contributions of mass

media as 'useless' when behaviour-turnaround is not simply and unequivocally produced (Kelly et al., 2001).<sup>17</sup>

In health promotional discourse, (didactic) mass media are understood to impact on individual and normative cultural levels through raising general awareness and improving base-line knowledge via conduit of information in simplified, repetitive messages - so creating 'a climate of opinion' that is conducive to new policies, norms, values, 'informed choices' and right action (Naidoo & Wills, 2000, p. 245). However, there are copious, well-evidenced literatures in South African HIV/Aids discourse on the 'failure' of mass communication, because its unidirectional, instructional, one-size-fits-all messaging cannot produce nuanced risk-understandings; and cannot impart/develop context-appropriate skills, actions and resources where these are deficient. Such anxiety about lack of media-penetration circles around particular South African communities, marked as recalcitrant, where (right, safe) HIV/Aids messaging seeks to re-inscribe (wrong, risky) traditional/cultural health beliefs. This has spawned many strategies to improve or enable persuasion; two salient ones being: (1) inclusion of particular rhetorical features *within* media discourse, and (2) addition of participatory, skills-based intervention elements *alongside* media discourse. An example will elaborate these.

Broadcast media messaging around HIV/Aids within rural - raced black, classed poor and acculturated as 'other' - locales was found to be cryptically bio-medicalized, and so disembedded from local regulatory practices around sex, fertility, contraception in families/communities (e.g. Harrison, Xaba, Kunene & Ntuli, 2001; Kelly & Ntlabati, 2002; Kuhn, Steinberg & Mathews, 1994; Ntlabati, Kelly & Mankayi, 2001); inadequately translated into indigenous languages (e.g. Crewe, 1992; Parker, 2003); and intermingled with suspicion about prior apartheid-State systems of African population-control (e.g. Campbell, 2003; Whiteside, 1993). In terms of position (1) then, more persuasive media programming, Usdin (1998) explicates *Soul City's* commitment to '*edutainment*'. This strategy establishes a weave of multi-media channels/programmes to knit HIV/Aids awareness, risk-reduction, treatment and de-stigmatization messaging – within an accessible 'real life mix' of social, health and personal issues – into narrative drama series (cf. 'soap



opera'). In the situated, reflective/comparative contexts of several families' experiences - based on qualitative research, but fictionalized and didactically mobilized - consequences of all kinds of ordinary actions, inactions and reactions are explored, skills rehearsed, and access to supportive resources signposted, in emotionally engaging and 'relevant to me' ways.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of position (2) - mass media communications do not work in isolation - social contexts of media appropriation are engaged with constitutively. This ensemble of different work (e.g. Campbell, 2003; Frizelle, 2005; Kelly et al., 2001; Parker, 2004) circles around two significant refusals. First is a flat rejection of the usefulness, in developing or under-developed contexts, of cognitive, information-based, and neo-liberal (New Public Health) models that devolve responsibility for change/misfortune to individuals. Second is resistance towards 'measuring media effects' in terms of behavioural indicators that suggest unequivocal success or failure of persuasion/performance. This acknowledges that media effects are usually partial, and further enacted (or not) through enabling environments, and other allied or contradictory interventions (Kelly, 2000).<sup>19</sup> This moves towards monitoring the swirling web of processes - psychosocial, familial, community, cultural, economic, and infra-structural - which multi-faceted, complex interventions, and parallel/rival interventions, bring about (Campbell & MacPhail, 1999; Campbell & Williams, 1998).

Campbell (2003) has harnessed the concept of 'social capital' to capture the dispersion of smaller successes and failures, at various levels, as compound evaluations of effects. Campbell understands 'a health enabling community' as a nexus of interactions, resources and norms that supports (a) the renegotiation of identities (both personal and social) and development of empowerment and critical consciousness, that underpin (b) health-enhancing choices and actions (p. 51). 'Social capital' refers then to forms of 'perceived citizen power' that impel participation in (centralized or dispersed) local networks, in return for increased levels of trust, reciprocal support, material benefit, and 'positive community identity' (p. 51). In other words, citizens are seen, heard and valued when they participate in decisions that affect families, schools and communities (cf. Campbell et al., 2005). Kelly and Van der Riet (2001) have documented the challenges of researching such sprawling

processes of social capital in community-based interventions. I have explored elsewhere the edgy collusions/collisions between 'social capital' and Foucault's (1991a) neo-liberal governmental rationality within the HIV/Aids-machine (see Wilbraham, 2005). These interesting ideas are beyond the scope of this thesis. I return to the critical place of talking and writing about sexual health education texts – as resistance to media discourse, as social capital – in HIV/Aids epidemic in the concluding chapter.

#### 4. SOUTH AFRICAN FAMILIES: MACRO-FORMS AND MICRO-PRACTICES

My literature review in Chapter 2 set up the hegemonic structural-functionalist view (and its discontents) of the modern nuclear family in bolstering social tranquility and safety in industrialized capitalist societies; and for providing stable familial/custodial arrangements for rearing (productive, risk-safe) children in particular ways. This section tracks what happens to (colonial) psy-complex imperatives in discourses about South African families and childrearing practices. In the next section, I review South African research on talking with children about sex.

##### **Classed family formations: nuclear and extended**

'The family' – as social institution or network – has been the object/subject of scattered South African social scientific analysis over the last 50 years; and this writing has been amplified through more contemporary examinations of the impacts of HIV/Aids on families (and family life on HIV/Aids risk). Social scientific writing has documented various 'erosions' of African families. These dissolutions include, for example, (1) historicized passage from (pre-colonial) 'forms of extended kinship' and customary arrangements, to uneasy collusions with colonial/Christian coercions and modernized nuclearities through (juridical) institutionalization of marriage (e.g. Delius & Glaser, 2002; Dozon, 1996; Simkins, 1986). These fragilely constituted nuclear families were then (2) strained, damaged or destroyed by apartheid-legislative policing of where/how families might live in terms of housing policies and labour migration patterns (e.g. Cock, Emdon & Klugman, 1986; Dawes & Donald, 1994; Liddell, Kvalsvig, Shabalala & Masilela, 1991; Marks & Rathbone,

1983; Spiegel & Mehlwana, 1996), and years of sustained violent resistance against institutionalized racial oppression and disenfranchisement (Campbell, 1990, 1994, 1997; Dawes, 1994).

More contemporary studies document (3) variously single-parented and extended family forms to cope with racialized, feminized poverty due to desertion/absence of male partners as breadwinners (e.g. Bozalek, 1997; Richter, 1994; Simkins, 1986; Steyn, 1991, 1996); and (4) the further material (and psychosocial) effects of HIV/Aids infection, illness, stigma and death on children and their parent/s (see substantive reviews: Bray, 2003; Foster & Williamson, 2000; Fox, Oyosi & Parker, 2002).

I return below to the psy-complex-inscribed literatures about negative psychological impacts on (raced) African and/or (classed) poor children of such 'adverse' social conditions, and concomitant implications of 'inappropriate' socialization provided by struggling, stretched or stricken (or absent) parent/s (Dawes & Donald, 1994). But a broader point about government is germane here. While South Africa's socio-political histories of colonization and apartheid have produced peculiarly pernicious injustices of power, there are similarities with other contexts where races, cultures and classes collide in that 'divergence' from western (middle classed) psy-complex gold standards for family-arrangements and childrearing has routinely attracted research scrutiny, (explicit/implicit) judgement as 'deficient', blame and/or sympathy, and (insidious/purposive) interventions to 'correct' parenting to install 'normality' as quickly as possible (e.g. Airhihenbuwa, 1995; Bozalek, 1997; Bray, 2003; Burman, 1994; Kasese-Hara, 2004; Macleod, 2002; Mkhize, 2004; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Wyness, 2000).

This thesis focused on pedagogical materials for (mostly) white, middle classed mothers/families. But empirical research literature on this *apparently 'normal'* category of families and childrearing is scanty relative to other categories perceived to have been subject to deep-rooted historicized oppressions and rapid cultural changes, and now occupy economically deprived environments that expose them to unfolding risks, and render them needful of interventions (Donald, Dawes & Louw, 2000; Marks & Rathbone, 1983).

However, such classed and racialized categories of families rely on one another, as 'Others', to perpetuate governmental effects around a colonial 'white-is-right', child-centred, authoritative parenting position (see Chapter 8).

Social scientific family-research in South Africa has been dominated by disciplinary/methodological tensions between (rarer) 'macro-studies', that examine shifting national patterns of social cohesion/change through fabrication of 'a general picture' of families; and (hosts of) so-called 'micro-studies', that seek to describe situated, lived experiences of diverse custodial network systems (Spiegel & Mehlwana, 1996). These sociological and anthropological traditions are salient to my arguments for two main reasons. First, the familial patterning that emerges in South African studies of African (and poorer) families is different from stereotypical representations of western 'nuclear families' (if this is indeed the dominant western form/norm); although nuclearity seems to hold fast among white (middle classed) South African families. This has implications for the childrearing and sex communication 'styles' that are micro-practiced within those formal custodial arrangements; and the social resources that embed families. Second, both macro-forms and micro-practices appear to fold along (racialized and) classed-poor lines rather than simply recycling exotic, colonial assumptions about 'African cultural beliefs' about children and childrearing (Richter, 1994; see also Chapter 8).

With macro-sociological zeal, Ziehl (2003) tries to cobble together a 'general picture' of family forms through meta-analysis of (flawed) 1996 South African census data. This circled around distinctions between *nuclear family patterns*, referring to establishment of conjugal co-residence in private units with offspring, commensality and patrilineal inheritance; and *extended family patterns*, referring to single or coupled parents joining the households of relatives on marriage, or other calamitous events. But further than this, Ziehl compared (questionable) South African data with (similarly questionable) data from the developed world; here United Kingdom statistics - attributed by Ziehl to Anthony Giddens' *Sociology* textbook, circa 1998 - are cited in square brackets after the South African ones (p. 219), viz. nuclear households, 20% [30%]; extended households, 27% [1%]; single-parented households, 15% [10%]; 'unclassifiable' households, 15% [2%]; childfree couples, 7% [28%];

single persons living alone, 17% [28%].<sup>20</sup> Ziehl (2003) concludes that while most people in Western Europe appear to follow - despite much vaunted divorce rates and 'diversity' of familial practices - a predictably *nuclear family pattern*, this is far less likely to be so in South Africa overall, where *extended family patterning* dominates (cf. Steyn, 1991, 1996).

Such extended familial patterning is evident within 'micro-studies'. Simkins (1986) meticulously reviewed decades of kinship studies in mostly African rural peasant or peri/urban township communities in South Africa. He found four historicized factors – cultural traditions, poverty, apartheid housing-policy and labour migration (influx control) legislation – implicated in dominance of 'matrifocality'. Predicated on the absence of partners/fathers (who sought employment in urban/industrial centres), matrifocality was defined as 'tacit mother-headed householder rights', where women controlled domestic and agrarian spheres – but remained economically dependent on men, and were subjected to their authority as 'wives' and 'mothers' (p. 24). Such financial arrangements were erratic and tenuous, and women/children generally lived in poverty, and under constant threat of abandonment and destitution, which they survived through (a) moving into various in/formal tenancy, kinship and inter-generational extended family networks in rural areas, and/or (b) seeking unskilled fulltime employment/lodging in urban centres themselves, leaving their children in the custody of others (Cock et al., 1986).<sup>21</sup>

These racialized patterns of poverty are recycled in contemporary studies of township and rural African families in South Africa (e.g. Bozalek, 1997, 2003; Campbell, 1990, 1994; Paruk, Petersen, Bhana, Bell & McKay, in press; Richter, 1994; Steyn, 1991, 1996; Ziehl, 1994). Ziehl (1994) points out that 'female-headed, single-parent families' produce different implications in (white) middle classed and (African) poor families, with raced-African poverty<sup>22</sup> associated with (1) breakdown of parental authority and custodial monitoring, (2) children's poor educational achievement, and lack of motivational direction for professional/prosperous futures, and (3) de-traditionalization of values, and loss of cultural regulatory frameworks for sex – factors strongly implicated with youth risks of HIV/Aids (Campbell, 1990; LeClerc-Madlala, 2001 & 2002b; Paruk et al., in press; Steyn, 1991).

Ziehl (1997) conducted a survey of household arrangements of 300 white middle classed families in a small university-city in the Eastern Cape province. Here she found that 'nuclear families' – either 'conventional' (1<sup>st</sup> marriage, with biological offspring), or 'blended' (2<sup>nd</sup> marriage, with both spouses' offspring from previous partnerships) – were more common than anticipated (68% of sample) given the high divorce rate among white South Africans. This concurs with Steyn's (1996) survey-calculation that 70% of white South Africans live in heterosexual nuclear-coupled arrangements with children. Ziehl (1997) concludes from all of the above that resource-poor material conditions, low economic status and imperatives for mothers' remunerated labour produce extended familial patterning to manage child-minding and rearing; while better material conditions were associated with nuclearity (cf. Bozalek, 1997, 2003).

### **Classed micro-practices of childrearing: child-centred and disciplinarian**

As I have suggested previously, Kelly et al.'s (2001) review of literature on youth risk of HIV/Aids emphasized impoverished contexts/resources as a central line of force in disenabling risk-reductive responses. Families – and the possibly supportive relations/communications that happen in their various forms – are located as *one* contextual mediator of youth responses, among many others, e.g. access to media, health services and sites of recreation/leisure, schools, peers, churches, sports clubs, community-based organizations, etc. (Kelly, 2000; Kelly & Parker, 2001a). This contextualized 'diffusion of influence' position constantly interrogates and resists the positioning of individual parents as solely responsible for the (positive or negative) developmental and risk-response outcomes of their children; and diverts attention to socio-structural systems and risky normative/community conditions 'up-stream' from family-dynamics and childrearing styles, and in which youth negotiate sex and risk/safety (Kelly et al., 2001, p. 33).

Along similar lines, Richter (1994) reviews the copious literature on the influence of economic stress and adversity on family and childrearing patterns. Her review includes various 'non-South African' adverse contexts (e.g. American under-classes/minorities), and finds – globally - that (1) poverty is taken to create 'a funnel of causality' for various

biological, psychological and social risks ranging from malnutrition and intellectual deficits, to mental disorders and criminality; and (2) deficient parenting in resource-poor circumstances is linked to risks (in youth) of early sexual activation, teenage pregnancy and HIV/Aids (p. 31). This 'funnel' is assumed to become a 'cycle' as a deprived child becomes a deprived/depriving parent who in turn produces deprived and 'anti-social' children (Bray, 2003).

Richter (1994) highlights two developmental psychological 'misconstructions' around cumulative deficit hypotheses that have haunted understandings of poverty and risk. The raced/classed deficit theories work within the ambit of Burman's (1994) 'developmental myth' that directly responsabilizes parents (mothers) for the outcomes of their children. I have adapted and crystallized Richter's (1994) review of these deficit-constructions of childrearing (p. 31-2), as follows:

1. *Culture of poverty* theories – where poverty as sub/culture transmits itself between generations through (a) notions of '*flawed character*', where parental inculcation of 'deficient' attitudinal, cognitive and behavioural traits in children (e.g. lack of self-esteem, autonomy, ambition for success, work ethic), prevents young people from utilizing available opportunities for class mobility in modern capitalist societies; or (b) notions of '*restricted opportunities*', where due to structural/economic barriers and prejudices, the poor have limited access to resources (e.g. education, status, voice, financial reserves, self-presentation skills), and are thus unable to escape the 'poverty trap', and are alienated from success in 'mainstream' (middle class) society.
2. *Poverty of culture* theories of 'cultural deprivation' – where 'black conscious', 'ethnocentric' and 'Africanist' (post-colonial) ideas were mobilized around the view that – due to conditions of colonial occupation, rapid social change, modernization and de-traditionalization – parents provided inadequate or inappropriate 'cultural experiences' (e.g. cultural/religious rites of passage, recognition of indigenous languages, cultivation of 'cultural pride') to equip

children with the explanatory models, self-world beliefs and values required to cope within either 'traditional' or 'modern' social matrices. Without these, people are figured as caught adrift between worlds, alienated from both, and with deficient 'containers' and 'tools' for thinking/acting through complex modern life (see Mkhize, 2004; L. Swartz, 1996, 1998; Yen & Wilbraham, 2003).

By contrast with these 'other cultures' then, white middle class children are *not* so culturally inscribed, and are difficult to incorporate within risk-categories because their 'appropriate' (by psy-complex standards) childrearing is assumed. In terms of bald, global comparisons between resource-rich and (deficient) resource-poor contexts for childrearing, Richter (1994) claims that poorer families tend to be associated with authoritarian, and less child-centred, styles of parenting, as follows. I will contextualize these trends in terms of South African studies on parental sex communication below.

- ❑ In poor or working class families, childrearing is affected by diminished maternal opportunity/capacity for child-centredness and monitoring of children's activities. This includes lower likelihood of: expression of affection, interest or praise; responsiveness to children's expressed needs; and explanation of issued commands or corporal punishments. These dynamics are aggravated by maternal ill health or depression, sustained economic insecurity, and unexpected negative life events.
- ❑ A larger amount of attention is dedicated to identifying (and intervening into) child abuse/neglect, and in anticipating risks of damages, within poor families.
- ❑ Middle-class mothering was found to be attentive and responsively attuned to children's feelings and understandings in their daily activities together. Middle classed mothers also expected their children to develop autonomy, and to work hard at achieving academic success.

These familiar constructions have been unpicked in classed parenting styles in other contexts (e.g. Britain: see Burman, 1994; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Walkerdine et al., 2001; Wetherell, 1995a; Wyness, 2000). But they appear to be bound into a peculiarly classed-poor, raced-black and acculturated-African nexus in South African (and other ex-colonial sites) understandings - where white folk/families are figured as class-, race- and



culture-free (cf. Foster, 2004; Mills, 1996; Stoler, 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), through their status as docile subjects of government by hegemonic (western) psy-complex dicta. As flawed and burlesque as (Americanized) parenting style assessments are, very little (if any) contemporaneously published social scientific or psychological literature could be found that systematically studied these stylistics in South Africa (exception: Steyn, Strijdom, Viljoen & Bosman, 1987 – out of print). However, numerous qualitative studies that incorporate familial micro-practices have described (and taken-for-granted) ‘cultural differences’ in passing.

Thus, inter-group assumptions, and attachment of risk-implications and protective factors to particular kinds of family-communication dynamics, have become commonplace in HIV/Aids research that refers to disparately acculturated ‘cultures of parenting’ in families (e.g. LeClerc-Madlala, 2001; Levine & Ross, 2002; Madison, McKay, Paikoff & Bell, 2000; Paruk et al., in press). This narrative finds African families, due to historicized cultural/economic circumstances and large family sizes, authoritarian and punitive, with poor communication patterning between parents and children (Richter, 1989) – poor communication about sex and other important matters. Thus, *increasing and improving* parent-child communication in families is understood to serve as a protective factor against HIV-infection (see below). This runs the risk of stereotyping classed or acculturated groups as homogenously inadequate, and avoiding engagement with stylistic variation within and overlap between African and other families within similar or different economic circumstances.

In articulating the collisions in South African childrearing discourses between class, culture and race, Richter (1994) appears to negotiate the interstices between critiques of (a) a ‘diversity’ of family practices (cultural relativist) position, where ‘African’ childrearing is vaunted as equal but different; and (b) a ‘family crisis’ position, where individual parents are called to mediate/remedy the harmful effects of poverty (see Chapter 2).

## Cultural diversity (and perils of relativism)

A cultural diversity position assumes that 'African' people hold tacit, local knowledges of children, child development and childrearing, which account for the reported differences in childrearing practices between groups (e.g. Airhihenbuwa, 1995; Kasese-Hara, 2002, 2004; Mkhize, 2004; Nsamenang, 1992, 1994). In ex-colonized contexts, such beliefs actively resist the so-called 'missionary ideology' of western developmental psychology, which 'crusades for converts' and claims to want to 'save' disadvantaged (African) families that deviate from western, middle classed norms of child-centredness (Airhihenbuwa, 1995). African childrearing – as in childrearing within larger sized (extended) or female-headed (single parented) families - is widely reported to be directive; and this is associated with compliance and obedience in children, stern admonishment and corporal punishment on transgression, and expressively distanced with respect to emotional attunement (Campbell, 1990, 1994; Giddy, 1996; Mbambo & Msikinya, 2003; Opolot, 1982).

Bozalek (1997, 2003) finds the 'stories of family' collected from her Social Work students at the University of the Western Cape – a mix of cultures, classes and races – to powerfully resist the (capitalist) ideological assumptions about nuclearity of families, 'secure attachment' (Bowlby) and 'good-enough mothering' (Winnicott) fed to them through their Euro-American textbooks. In her students' working class or rural peasant accounts of their family micro-practices, mothers and fathers often worked a long distance away; children were raised by strict grandmothers or aunts; they were expected to participate in household chores (including custodial care of younger siblings), to do well at school, and to 'stay away from boys/sex' to avoid punishment; and they were excluded from family decision-making (usually done by distant male 'elders' of the extended kin/family network), even when these matters directly concerned them (e.g. illness/death of a parent due to Aids). I return to the strong evocation of 'cultural taboo' (in African and other culture/s) around parental talking about sex with children in the next section.

Bozalek's (2003) call for 'respect' for such diversely acculturated childrearing practices tackles two 'conflations' made by western psy-complex 'family-ism'. (1) Family-ism

conflates (demonized) 'authoritarian parenting' with (even worse) 'gross neglect' of children, and to which constellation is attached negative youthful outcomes of poor self-esteem, passivity, compliance, impressionability to social influence, lacklustre academic ability, hostility and rebelliousness; and then (2) family-ism conflates these psychological traits with social problems, such as crime, risk-taking, sexual promiscuity, unwanted pregnancy, etc. (cf. Bozalek, 1994). Such negative assumptions are classed-poor and raced-African in that they do not appear to be similarly inscribed on white, Afrikaner or Indian 'authoritarian parenting cultures' in South Africa, such as in instances when deep-rooted religious values (usually Christian, Muslim or Hindu) are said to inform childrearing practices (e.g. Richter, 1994), and talking with children about sex (e.g. Frizelle, 2005), in particularly restrictive or punitive ways.

As Dawes and Donald (1994) argue, the issue of cultural relativism is politically fraught in South Africa: it is as easy to disparage the integrity of African cultural attributes as 'inadequate' when compared with the hegemonic western psy-complex, as it is to reinforce negative effects of adversity/poverty through ignoring the beneficence of such a psy-complex in activism around children's needs/rights. The problem is exacerbated through a (mistaken) discursive split between 'culture' and 'socio-economic class'. Thus, authoritarian childrearing practices are taken as (liberal) evidence of (essential, stereotypical) 'cultural differences', rather than as constantly re-fabricated in response to particular (oppressive, adverse) conditions. The diversity view also mistakenly assumes, in Richter's (1994) view, that poor, working class and/or African parents 'choose' to raise their children in authoritarian ways because they 'believe' or 'know' them to be best practice; rather than as a classed reduction of economic resources, formal education, parenting options and so-called 'quality time' with children.

Making assumptions about the effects of poverty - or relative affluence - on childrearing positions parents as mediators of children's experience of the economic activities/environment in which they are embedded. In other words, children are socialized into particular modes of thought and behaviour through un/witting parenting styles, which correspond to parents' experience in and engagement with economic conditions (cf.

Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Richter's (1994) review of childrearing practices in conditions of adversity points directly to the problem of positioning parents as responsible for the outcomes of their children: parents are blamed for negative outcomes, *and* for poverty (cf. Burman, 1994).

Richter appears to (uneasily) sidestep this through recourse to diffusion of social influences, and (veiled) resilience, positioning. Thus, she warns against naïve assumptions about the stable, monolithic role of parents and childrearing practices, with 'immense power to impress (their) expectations on developing children' (Hess, cited in Richter, 1994, p. 35). This view of imprinting passive, isolated, vulnerable children is difficult to operationalize in modern, technologically complex, differentiated societies. Within a matrix of multiple contextual mediators, many in/direct, intersecting lines of force and sites of implantation are seen to diffuse the impact of any one socializing unit or agent (cf. Kelly & Parker, 2001a).

## 5. COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT SEX IN SOUTH AFRICAN FAMILIES

### Presence or absence of sex-talk

Given the moral panicky construction of the HIV/Aids epidemic as a 'youth crisis' in South Africa (Parker, 2005a), it is somewhat surprising that relatively little close-grained, qualitatively sustained attention has been given to situated micro-practices of discoursing about sex in families; and conversely, to the (ideological) subject positioning inherent in the frequent, plaintive calls for the installment of such practices into so-called 'uncommunicative' families. With a few notable exceptions, South African HIV/Aids research has subsumed parental communication about sex as one possible, important factor - viz. 'source of information' - into the juggernaut of KAPB surveys. Thus, superficial reference is made to familial micro-practices largely in judgemental terms of 'presence' or 'absence' of parental communication about sex, its supposed inadequacy, and its inherent risks when co-varying with behavioural indicators. There is some nifty (ideological) persuasion and positioning in this.

South African youth routinely report being (fairly well) informed about sex and HIV/Aids risk by media, friends and schoolteachers. But this is just-as-routinely coupled – by youth themselves and by un/witting researchers - to vaguer, and apparently thwarted, desires and willingness to ‘learn about sex’ from parents (e.g. *loveLife*, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c); or to talk with parents about ‘relationships’ and ‘feelings’ in more intimate ways (Campbell & MacPhail, 2003b). Yet it remains resolutely unclear (a) what youth think it is that they would like to usefully learn/hear/share with parents; or (b) whether *any* parental technology of sexual conversation would – by the very nature/tone of its pedagogical inscription - be repelled as inadequate (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; Wilbraham, 2002; Wyness, 1992; see Chapter 3). Both (a) and (b) are staunchly governed by interpellation into dominant western discourses of the psy-complex; for example, through psychoanalytic and storm-and-stress assumptions about sexualized subjectivities.

But, if young people can be manoeuvred into positioning as ‘willing’ to learn/talk with parents, then they are rendered risk-prone (to early sexual activation, unwanted pregnancy and HIV/Aids) by their authoritarian, conservative, ignorant or absent parents’ lack of communication about sex. This shifts the disciplinary gaze to (risky) individual parents/families nested within (even riskier) classed communities and cultures – thought to hold authoritarian parents in sways of sexual silence (taboo on talk), confusion, fear and inadequacy (e.g. Campbell, 1990, 1994; LeClerc-Madlala, 2001, 2002b; Paruk et al., in press). The way is thus cleared for a phalanx of interventions into parenting practices, to install more open patterns of parent-child communication (about sex, mostly) as a technology of amelioration of risk at inter-personal and normative levels (e.g. *AmaQhawe*: Bhana et al., 2004; *loveLife*, 1999, 2000b, 2000c; *Soul Buddyz/Soul City*, 2000).

This thesis focuses on *Lovelines*, an element of the *loveLife* parent-campaign, and so this section begins with *loveLife*’s truth-by-survey with regards parent-child communication about sex. Fissures are opened/closed through reference to other qualitatively deeper, social scientific research and interventions in passing.

## The loveLife parenting-juggernaut

The *loveLife* parenting campaign – *Love them enough to talk about sex* – commenced during 1999, with a media blitz of billboards; full-page advertisements in national Sunday newspapers; the launch of *Parentline*, a national telephonic help-line for parenting counsel; and several print supplements distributed through other media. I itemize these print supplements, because they were used (exclusively) as re/source material for the *Lovelines* series that appeared in *Fairlady* during 2000:

- *Loud & Clear: Tips for talking to your children about difficult things* (*loveLife*, 1999) – a communication manual based on the *Cody: Loud & Clear* television series, which addressed parents and children between the ages of 6 and 12 years;
- *Hot prospects, cold facts: A portrait of young South Africans* (*loveLife*, 2000a) – sets out ‘facts’ of young people’s knowledge about sex and HIV/Aids, attitudes and sexual behaviour, and explains their risk in terms of the storm-and-stress model of adolescence;
- *Love them enough to talk about sex* (*loveLife*, 2000b) – a (selective) literature review for a parental audience, outlining the scientific premises on which the parenting campaign regarding open communication about sex in families as risk-inoculation of youth was based;
- *Talking and listening, parents and teenagers together: Find out how to make it easier* (*loveLife*, 2000c & 2002b) – a communication manual featuring tips and tactics for both parents and teenagers.

As will be evident from an above section, *loveLife*’s ‘evaluation research policy’ is committed to monitoring the web/machinery of *loveLife*-products, programmes and activities as a whole, as ‘brand-consciousness’ (e.g. D. Harrison, 2002a & 2002b; *loveLife*, 2002a, 2003, 2004; Pettifor et al., 2004; Stadler, 2001; Stadler & Hlongwa, 2002). Individual elements of a sprawling, inter-textual campaign are not independently evaluated. Thus, *loveLife*’s two-yearly surveys are geared towards establishing awareness of *loveLife* campaigning, and attempting to link this to national *changes* in sexual knowledges, attitudes and practices (Parker, 2003).

But, as Parker (2003) argues, the difficulty of obtaining access in the public domain to *loveLife's* baseline research studies, casts suspicion over their claims-making. All *loveLife* print supplements listed above make reference to initial focus group discussions conducted with youth and parents during 1997-1998, as *loveLife* commenced its sexual health promotion operation; and this research cited as emitting from (a commercial research agency) Kaufman, Levin and Associates, 1998. This original report could not be traced. Extracts of youthful and parental talk from the report enliven the preachy narrative of print supplements; consistently revealing that young people (a) *wanted* to hear about sex from their parents, seemingly as primary sources, when they are children; and (b) *wanted* continuing conversations with parents about issues of sex, relationships and 'life' as they grow up (*loveLife*, 2000c, 2002b). Subsequent evaluative KAPB surveys have stuck resolutely to this principle – apparently founded in international *World Health Organization* studies on youth HIV/Aids risk mediators (e.g. Grunseit et al., 1997; see Chapter 3) – despite the emergence of nuanced, somewhat contradictory evidence.

The *2001 National Survey of South African Youth* (*loveLife*, 2002a) – conducted in the year after the *Lovelines* series had been run in *Fairlady* magazine – surveyed and interviewed a 'nationally representative random sample' of 2204 youth aged between 12-17 years, and their parents/guardians. Some of the paradoxical findings of this quantitative survey were as follows:

- The main sources of sexual information for youth surveyed were media (television and magazines), schoolteachers and friends; 45% of youth surveyed had had 'some' communications with their mothers about HIV/Aids and sex, and 67% said their fathers played no role in their sexual knowledge whatsoever. From these miscellaneous sources, youth surveyed had achieved 'fairly accurate knowledge' about basic sexual concepts, although some misperceptions existed (e.g. 'safe sex means having sex with a virgin').
- Youth who were aware of *loveLife* programming (62% of youth surveyed) said that although *loveLife* had provided opportunities to talk with parents, they were more likely to discuss sex with friends, and preferred this. However, 82% believed that an

environment of open communication about sex in families reduced risks of HIV/Aids.

- Parents who were aware of *loveLife* programming (41% of parents surveyed) said they were concerned about HIV/Aids risk, but were unconvinced about the positive impact of open communication with their children on sexual health outcomes.
- Parents that reported talking with their children, warned them about HIV/Aids (72%), but avoided topics related to sex and sexuality (see Figure 3).

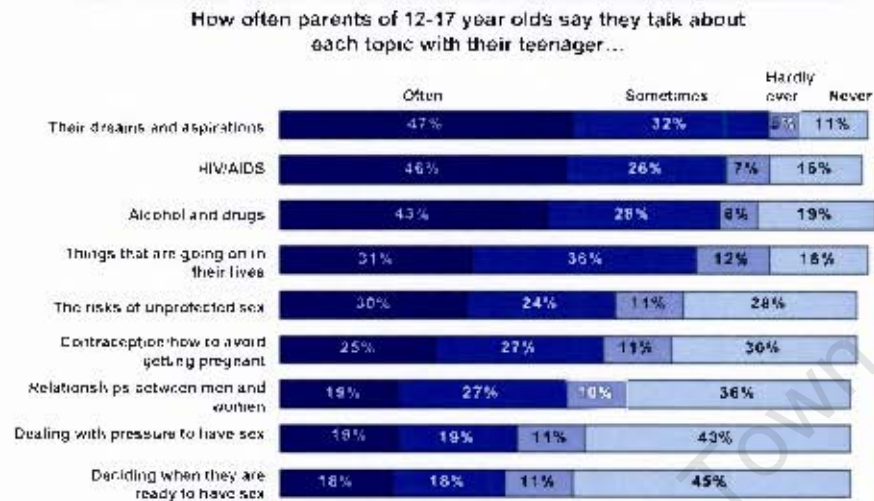
To *loveLife* (2002a), the findings of the *2001 National Youth Survey* represented 'challenge(s) to be addressed in further programming' (p. 53), which was committed to creating an environment in which more open discussion between parents and their children about sex and sexuality is the norm. The charts reproduced overleaf from the survey (Figures 3, 4 and 5) indicate 'topics' – prompted by forced choice items in the survey - that (*loveLife* deemed) *should* be included in a curriculum of parent-youth conversations, viz. children's aspirations for the future, HIV/Aids, alcohol and drugs, risks of unprotected sex, normative pressures to have sex, and deciding when and whether to have sex. Figure 3 represent the frequencies that parents reported talking about these issues with their adolescent children; and figures 4 and 5 represent youth's estimations of these discussions with parents. It is evident that young people surveyed reported talking with their parents about sexual issues far less frequently than their parents reported this (cf. Wyness, 1992).

A problem with such a (frequency of) presence versus absence of sex/risk topics approach – unconsidered by *loveLife* - is that it severs 'conversations' about sex from (most likely, authoritarian) patterns of parent-child communication that are established in families early on (Kelly & Parker, 2001a); and assumes *any increase* in parental communication about sex and the plethora of risks is necessarily beneficial to risk-reduction behaviour. As Kaaya, Mukoma, Flisher and Klepp (2002) point out, increased communication with parents about sex – particularly where this is coercive and authoritarian, and no attention given to emotional atmosphere or general parenting dynamics - may open up further vulnerability, deceit, manipulateness, conflict, recrimination, and unwillingness to participate. Kelly and Parker (2001a) agree that it is naïve to assume conversations about sex can simply 'start'



Figure 3

### Parents Talk With Their Kids About...



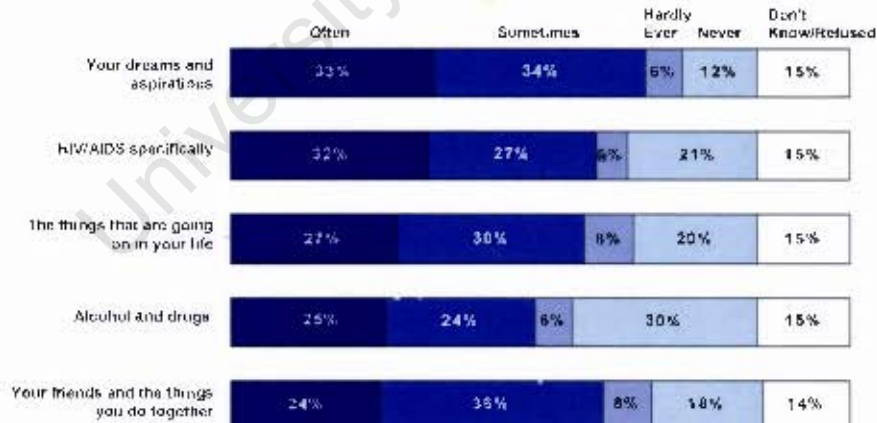
Note: 'Don't know/Refused to answer' omitted.  
 Source: The 2007 National Survey of South African Youth (conducted October-November 2007). Africa Statistical Research Unit/University of Cape Town Family Foundation.

Figure 4

### Communicating with Parents

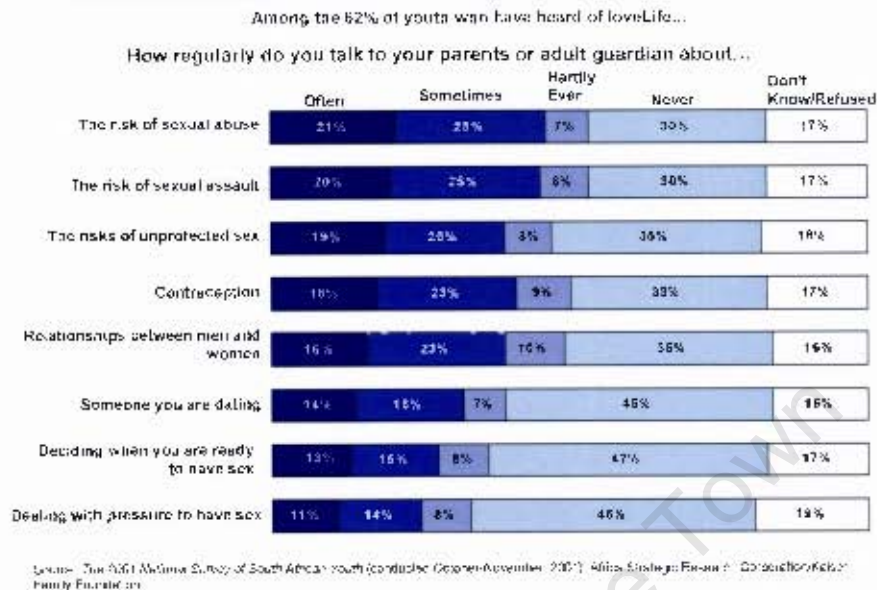
Among the 62% of youth who have heard of level life...

How regularly do you talk to your parents or adult guardian about...



Source: The 2007 National Survey of South African Youth (conducted October-November 2007). Africa Statistical Research Unit/University of Cape Town Family Foundation.

Figure 5  
**Communicating with Parents about Sex and Relationships**



**Figure 3:** Self-reported frequency of discussion of sex-topics *by parents* with their adolescent children

**Figures 4 & 5:** Self-reported frequency of discussion of sex-topics *by adolescents* with their parents

**Source:** The 2001 National Survey of South African Youth (loveLife, 2002a, p. 14-16)

because *loveLife* says so, without trusting relationships and a more or less private time/space between parents and (individual) children in which they might take place.

The *loveLife*-sponsored *2003 National Survey of HIV and Sexual Behaviour among 15-24 years olds* was primarily a questionnaire-survey of risk behaviour and (Orasure/saliva) HIV-test to establish sero-prevalence among a far larger sample of 17 450 youth (Pettifor et al., 2004). Again, positive (risk-reductive) behavioural shifts among young people were associatively linked to awareness of *loveLife* programming. No parents were surveyed, but youth reports on parental communication about sex showed a slightly more differentiated picture on the usefulness of such conversations. Thus, 44% of youth surveyed (48% of females, 39% of males) reported that they had talked to their parents or guardians about HIV/Aids and sex at least once; although 37% of these regarded the impact of such parental conversations as negligible alongside conversations they had actively/spontaneously initiated themselves with friends, schoolteachers or their sexual partners (cf. Campbell & MacPhail, 2002, 2003b).

The youth surveyed in the *2003 National Survey of HIV and Sexual Behaviour* who had spoken with their mothers found them obsessively concerned with 'facts' of reproduction, pregnancy and abstinence (cf. Kelly & Parker, 2001a). Young people also reported learning about different aspects/issues of sexuality from different sources, at different times, e.g. friends were most helpful when discussing pressures to have sex, and health care workers at *NAFCI* clinics provided the most useful information on contraception and condom-use. Kelly (2000) found that younger adolescents (15 years and below) were more likely to approach parents for information than older adolescents, who turned to friends for advice and discussion. These findings break down, at least, the developmental myth that parents should be responsabilized to confer complete and accurate sex/uality knowledge on passive, innocent, 'willing' to be informed young people (see Chapter 7).

## Youthspeak: 'Not Aids again!'

Indeed, several South African researchers have picked up the rank *unwillingness* of young people to be subjected to a surfeit of fairly abstract information – from varieties of sources, but particularly from parents – that hamfistedly conflated sex with risk, disease or dire consequences. In interviews conducted with 480 young people (by university students) in Cape Town, Levine and Ross (2002) reported high levels of 'HIV information fatigue' (e.g. 'Not Aids again!' responses), which worked (a) to desensitize and disown risk through entrenching constructions of risky/safe groups (e.g. Africans are risky, whites/Indians are safer: see Frizelle & King, 2002); and (b) to generate resistance to the blatantly moralistic, 'anti-sex' messages inscribed within parental and sexual health campaign agendas.<sup>23</sup> This is a reaction to the perceived lack of practical risk-reductive safer sex options, including availability, negotiation and technical use of condoms, within repetitive Aids-awareness information (Levine & Ross, 2002).

Pattman and Chege (2003) unpack the dominant risk (and moral) injunction of HIV/Aids pedagogy in Eastern and Southern African interventions with young people, as 'talk about sex, but don't do sex'. This is a well-meaning (abstinence) injunction against early sex, and sex with multiple partners, and also an injunction for a dialogical approach to sex, assumed to spill over (later on) into negotiation of safer sex. But its prohibitions have tended to construct sex as 'naughty' when it is talked about, with parents, teachers and peers. Many South African researchers have thus found younger adolescents to say that initiating an exploratory conversation with a parent about sex is tantamount to a confession of sexual activation (e.g. Campbell & MacPhail, 2002, 2003b; Frizelle & King, 2002; Kelly, 2000); and young people tactically 'wait' for (and dread) parent-instigated interactions, and/or carefully construct defensive scenarios about 'other' young people rather than themselves (Dunn, 2004).

'Accessing' from young people such self-report accounts of years of intricate familial patterning of interactions about sex is slippery in itself. Pattman and Chege (2003) expose sex-talk as deeply embedded in gendered performances – for example, in their single- and

mixed-gender discussion groups about sex and HIV/Aids, boys bragged and joked, positioning themselves as sexually active and experienced; while girls presented themselves as asexual objects of sexual desire/advances/information. This produced rather profound insights into the different constructions of sexual communication that might emerge within different methodologies/contexts (e.g. discussions, interviews, diaries), for in Pattman and Chege's groups, some girls admitted they had spoken about sex with their mothers (although not what these conversations were about); but none of the boys did, or could/would, because this was apparently seen as 'sissy' and 'effeminate'.

Documenting what South African youth say about their parents' (apparently paltry) attempts at communication about sex inevitably swerves into treacherous terrains of racial divisions, social inequities and acculturated beliefs. Frizelle and King (2002) give account of their university students' outreach/service learning module that facilitated discussions with young people (15-16 years old) in several schools serving differentially classed/raced communities in Durban. Unfortunately, their impressions are presented without 'talk data' from the discussions, but the discursive territories and sexual subject positions – and inter-subjectivities with parents - are clearly etched, as follows.

*African* learners reported being unable to speak with their authoritarian parents/guardians about sex at all (see below); and they resorted to friends, media, teachers or older siblings to make sense of the 'overwhelming' information on HIV/Aids, and their own direct experience of risk through coerced sex, and the (stigmatized, silenced) Aids deaths in their families and community. Although *Indian* learners enjoyed generally warm and supportive familial relationships, they figured a strong 'cultural taboo' in talking about sex with their parents; the taboo was partly fabricated as 'religious beliefs' (e.g. Hindu or Muslim), and partly as smothering 'over-protection' by their controlling, concerned and devoted parents. Such 'cultural taboo' was depicted as frustrating, because they felt increasingly alienated from strongly acculturated beliefs, and they perceived 'Indians' – as a group – to be relatively HIV risk-free. *White* learners reported (unspecific) interactions with parents about sex and pregnancy rather than HIV/Aids, from which they felt – personally and as a family

- distant and immune. They believed the media 'scare tactics' about HIV/Aids, but applied them to poor, African or uneducated people.<sup>24</sup>

Such 'findings' concur with Kelly's (2000) exposition of young people's responses to HIV/Aids in six classed/raced sentinel sites, with exception of white youth. Thus, sexually active learners at a private school in an affluent Johannesburg-suburb, whose parents were well-educated professionals, reported fairly relaxed post-pubertal interactions about sex with their parents; and normative condom-use with partners, rather than tremulously re-negotiated every time they had sex, for both genders. Dunn's (2004) in-depth interviews with four white, middle class young women (17 to 22 years) demonstrated the perils of generalizing parenting and sex-talking 'styles' across families that were similarly raced/classed. The interviews trailed through these young women's diverse accounts of un/easy relationships with their mothers, in which intermittent conversations about sex were made to happen (or did not) in different ways at different times through the gamut of busy familial lives, e.g. parental divorce, spousal disputes over autonomy-granting, menarche, first-boyfriends, etc. This communication was not figured as always comfortable, without disharmony or particularly useful; but as a more/less trusting relationship, which enabled the young women, increasingly, to responsibly manage their own lives.

Campbell (1994, 1997) and Campbell and MacPhail (2003b) present a different picture of African township youth. Young Africans have consistently reported a 'cultural taboo' on talking about sex with their parents, but this seems to be a fraught nexus of variously historicized lines of colonialist, Christianizing force lacerating so-called 'African sexuality', and resistances to this, rather than a static cultural essence (Delius & Glaser, 2002). Thus, for example, the authoritarian dynamics of African childrearing (see above) pivot on didactic directives and punitiveness; this does not facilitate 'open communication' (e.g. about relationships or sexual feelings/activities), and any questioning is interpreted as disrespect of parental authority. Young girls and boys report that mothers may issue stern, cryptic warnings about sex, pregnancy or disease (Campbell & MacPhail, 2003b), but in extended family structures it appears that responsibility for such sexual instruction is deferred, disrupted, diffused and/or ignored (LeClerc-Madlala, 2001, 2002b).

Township youth in Campbell's (1994, 1997) earlier study report that although they respect the financial sacrifices made on their behalves by their parents, their parents' authority had been severely undermined by (youth's) political activism during the 1980s, and erosion of the traditional value of parental authority through modern industrialized urbanization. Their parents' ongoing poverty, and particularly their mothers' lowly gendered status in the family/community, was regarded as pitiable and shameful rather than as resourcefulness and resilience to emulate. Thus, youth did not seek (nor want) parental instruction/counsel on sex/uality; parents were regarded as 'conservative', 'backward' (uneducated), and 'unknowledgeable' and 'inexperienced' in dealing with HIV/Aids.

### **Parents talk and talk, but 'our children don't listen'**

Paruk et al.'s (in press) ethnographic case study of African (Zulu) parents or caregivers in a semi-rural area outside Durban provides parents' sides of the above youthful stories. Paruk et al. deployed a psychodynamic version of social representations theory (cf. Joffe, 1999) to interpret forces at community- and family levels that lacerate parental attempts to 'inform' their children about sex and HIV/Aids. I will not reconstruct the psychodynamic interpretation here, but review empirical findings that concur with similar studies from rural/poorer contexts (e.g. Giddy, 1996; Harrison, Xaba, Kunene & Ntuli, 2001; Kelly & Ntlabati, 2002).

At community level, Paruk et al. report that breakdown of traditional leadership structures (e.g. tribal chiefs, political organizations) has unraveled acculturated customs that previously scaffolded the ritual initiation of youth into maturity (e.g. circumcision/menstruation 'schools' conducted by elders and healers). Thus, sexual instruction never was a familial function in traditional African custom; but had now fallen to mothers by default. The lack of instructional support on how to cope with modern youth was exacerbated by contradictory information, perceived by parents as frightening – for example: parents talking with children about sex (a) 'makes children experiment with sex' (cultural belief), *versus* (b) 'makes children wait longer to have sex' (modern belief).<sup>25</sup> The

situation had worsened within epidemic conditions, with elevated HIV+ sero-prevalence among youth and adults. Mothers in this study reported deliberately misinforming children about sex to scare them off, e.g. being touched by a boy causes pregnancy or Aids.

At family levels, Paruk et al. argue that lack of instructional containment of parents, and disempowerment, has undermined parental capacity to parent effectively. Thus, parents reported a 'generational knowledge gap' - children were more highly educated, and knew more about HIV/Aids, than them - had eroded (a) traditional parental authority to control/influence their children's behaviour, and (b) children's respect for parents. These mothers perceived their parental authority further undermined by the new constitution of 'children's rights' purveyed through explicit sex in media, and compulsory sex education in schools - which had displaced 'traditional cultural practices' of sexual regulation, e.g. corporal punishment, virginity-testing, bride-price penalties for pregnancy (e.g. Giddy, 1996; LeClerc-Madlala, 2001, 2003; Mbambo & Msikinya, 2003). Paruk et al. report that parents, in desperation, resorted to increasingly punitive parenting techniques to punish sexual misdemeanours or disobedience, including beating adolescents, locking them inside houses, or sending them away to stay with distant relatives in unfamiliar local networks, out of the 'negative reach' of friends (cf. Wilbraham, 2004b). Kelly and Parker (2001a) found that some rural grand/mothers took girls to primary health care clinics for hormonal contraceptive injections if they suspected they had become interested in boys, as a precaution against pregnancy (and which left them unprotected against HIV/Aids).

Studies such as the above with African families in poorer rural and urban informal settlement communities around Durban formed baseline material that lead to the introduction of (American) *CHAMP - Collaborative HIV/Aids & Adolescent Mental Health Programme* - to South Africa, as *AmaQhawe*, meaning champions or heroes in Zulu (Bhana & Petersen, 2005). As a complex, multi-faceted intervention, *AmaQhawe* works to strengthen resources at *individual levels*, e.g. life skills to develop resilient youth who resist negative peer influences; *family levels*, e.g. develop positive parent-child communication, particularly around sex and reasonable responses to HIV/Aids; and *community levels*, e.g. to develop social networks based on trust and support, particularly as



people become ill and die of Aids. The *AmaQhawe* family materials were developed along Freireian principles of group-based participatory adult education – i.e. using open-ended ‘codes’ to reflect critically on experience and work through more effective behavioural options – and a micro-media cartoon narrative of typical scenarios and characters has been developed and piloted (Bhana et al., 2004). The intervention is developed around a series of weekly group sessions, each detailing a ‘sensitive topic’ (e.g. puberty, menstruation, sex, HIV/Aids, various ‘myths’ about pregnancy, how to use condoms, having strong views/values on an issue, etc.), which are workshopped and role-played to develop skills, with take-home materials and assignments. The *AmaQhawe* programme is currently being administered (on a trial basis) to 300 families over a period of 2 years.

My own position is critical towards the (sole) responsabilization of parents for risk-proofing and sexual pedagogization of children. However, I review the above micro-media, participatory project in some detail, because of the limits of mass media campaigning I have mentioned, and also to mark another instance of fabricating niche-targeted intervention materials involving media (cf. *Soul City*). This contrasts with apparently ‘generic’ parenting manuals/programmes on children’s sexualities and communication about sex with children - developed in South Africa along international guidelines (see Chapter 3) - where the only reference to local experience is of a (rather exotic in the colonial imagination) ‘cultural taboo’ that should be overcome, due to dire risks associated with children’s sexual ignorance (e.g. Greathead, 1998; Perlman, 1997; *Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa*, 1996, 1998; Potgieter & Fredman, 1997; Tomaszewski, 1989; Van Rooyen & Ngwenya, 1997).

The *loveLife/Lovelines* texts to be analyzed later on are explicitly directed at (mostly white) middle classed mothers - as *Fairlady* readers – assumptions about whose mothering, and communication with children about sex, and the normative contexts of risk in which they live, are thereby differentially inscribed (to these ‘African Others’).

## Talking about sex: the same old raced/classed and gendered work

Giddy's (1996) study of parental responses to 'sex education in the home' in rural KwaZulu-Natal, did not set out to compare racialized/classed groups along lines of adequacy of sex communicative endeavour; but unavoidably ended up doing this through sampling mothers into homogeneous discussion groups in which they would feel comfortable to share their parenting experiences in an equitable manner (e.g. socio-economic status, cultural background, language proficiency). Giddy was a medical doctor at a rural hospital, and discussion groups reflected this association – African nurses or general hospital staff; white fulltime mothers lived in a nearby town, and were wives/partners of various medical services professionals. A broadly phenomenological approach was deployed, which produced a set of 'situated themes' for each group, and a 'master-list' of integrated themes. The findings from the (rural) African mothers concur with studies reviewed above (e.g. Campbell, 1990, 1994, 1997; Harrison, Xaba, Kunene & Ntuli, 2001; Kelly & Ntlabati, 2002; Paruk et al., in press), and I review white mothering experiences by way of contrast.

Giddy's (1996) overweening thematic finding was of slippage between 'polarities of ideals and realities' (p. 58). In other words, there were high degrees of knowledge (from experts) about what 'sex education' *should* incorporate/achieve, and unequivocal (ideological) buy-in to the notion that talking about sex with children inoculated them from risk (ideals); but that contextual situations variously stymied, thwarted, or transformed such ideals (realities). The major difference between African and white mothers appeared as the resources that were available to them (or were not), and which variously dis/enabled parenting choices and outcomes (cf. Kelly & Parker, 2001a).

Thus, African mothers reported that they '*had* talked and talked' (to children) – usually in the form of warnings about pregnancy or HIV/Aids, and threats – but that 'our children of today's time do not *listen*' (p. 137), read *obey*, and many participants' daughters, or girls of their acquaintance, had apparently become pregnant and/or HIV+ at young ages. These mothers felt the 'realities' (e.g. negative peer influences, early sexual activation, sexual coercion of girls by older boys/men in return for money, multiple 'modern' sources of sex

information that made children curious, stigma/denial about HIV/Aids, etc.) completely overwhelmed 'ideals', and were beyond their control in the interstices between rural poverty, 'culture' and epidemic. However, white mothers were able to 'appropriate' selected aspects of the 'ideals' (on the basis of informed choice), and work them into and around the contextual realities of their familial lives.

I have slightly refigured some of the crucial contextual and instructional features of white mothers' accounts of talking about sex with their children identified by Giddy (1996); and reflect this in the bullets that follow as qualitatively 'different' to African mothering. A methodological caveat might add here that mothers in interviews/discussions about their children, and authority of their childrearing practices, might realistically be expected to 'fabricate' themselves and their parenting in 'socially desirable' ways, to avoid blame and shame (cf. Wyness, 2000). While this was a horror to Giddy's meticulous phenomenological authenticity of experience, it is a delight to my Foucauldian gaze on psycho-social government of (white, middle classed) mothering through expertise (cf. Chapter 2):

- Mothers had access to multiple sources/genres of parenting information – e.g. psychological, folk, faith-based (Christian), bio-medical – on children's developmental paths, childrearing norms, 'sex education' and HIV/Aids. They were media-literate (often critical of media programming around sex/uality and risk); and they deployed selective and/or woven-together versions of all of above into their own parenting micro-practices;
- Even if it was 'embarrassing' (a common response), mothers provided incremental bits/levels of honest ('sort of biological' and 'de-personalized') information to children, either in response to children's questions and conversations, or on a need-to-know basis according to age and exposure to particular events/issues;
- Sexual discussions with older children ('adolescents') became more issue- and value-based, and their sexual behaviour was 'co-regulated' (negotiated between young person and parents) with incremental autonomy granted based on trust and maturity; also, young people were seen as a vital source of sexual instruction, socialization and role modeling for younger siblings;

- ✓ □ Mothers monitored what 'other' sexualized information children were exposed to (e.g. at school, media, friends) – not to exclude negative influence per se, but to dialogue/frame it in particular ways, and to identify worthy (positive) role-models or voices/experts;
- ✓ □ Strongly Christian mothers incorporated valuational, moral and abstinence messages into regularized 'sex educational' conversations with children; and actively sought to engage children within family-based leisure or outreach activities with friends that shared similar values/beliefs and behaviours;
- ✓ □ Fulltime mothers were present as custodians to monitor, manage and stimulate children's leisure activities; and ferried children to after/school activities in private vehicles.
- ✓ □ The role of fathers was regarded as important in provision of appropriately gendered role modeling and sex information for boys (in particular); it appeared that mothers *asked* fathers to do this.

#### Life skills programmes at South African schools

Both African and white mothers in Giddy's (1996) study made mention of impending imposition of South Africa schools-based 'sex education' (see *National Education Policy Act*, 1996) – as compulsory life skills curricula – with some ambivalence and trepidation, for different reasons. African (resource-poorer) mothers saw this as (a) usefully filling an informational and authority gap that their parental inadequacy could not (viz. 'teaching facts' to children so that they *would* listen/obey), but (b) further undermining forms of cultural practice/authority. White mothers saw this as (c) useful exposure of everyone to shared (biological and/or psychological) forms of knowledge about sex, sexuality and negotiating risk – a leveling of the playing field - but (d) objected to the lack of (Christian) values or moral-framework, and particularly abstinence messaging, in what 'they had heard about' the Department of Health/Education's public-school curriculum (cf. other dissenting voices on 'cultural' grounds: LeClerc-Madlala, 2003; Mbambo & Msikinya, 2003; Mbetse, 2001).

Although Giddy (1996) reviewed several American texts on the rightful place of 'Christian values' in so-called 'sex education', I could find little formally published research within this frame in the South African domain. Christianized diatribes – in 'highly emotive language' about 'pornographic filth in the media', 'immoral promiscuity', and 'rampant Aids' (see *Christians for Truth* pamphlet, Giddy, 1996, p. 31-2) – tend to circulate via localized pamphlets, newspaper coverage, and dedicated websites. It is ironic that 'cultural taboo' – fabricated through historicized, colonial-harnessing in of perceptions of African hypersexuality by Christian missionaries and mission-schools in South Africa since 1750 - is formally unpicked/unpacked in social scientific journals and at academic conferences (e.g. Delius & Glaser, 2002); whereas 'white religiosity' escapes similar scholarly attention, and exoticisation.

The emergence of this schools-based life skills curriculum has, since 1996, been tied up in knots of legal discourse; cycles of development (and 'testing') of materials through various independently contracted (and competitive) health education agencies; acrimonious disputes between polarized 'anti' versus 'pro' positions in a public consultation process; Department of Education's unfolding strategic plans for outcomes-based education; training of life skills educators (again, by various independently contracted health education agencies); and faltering and patchy rollouts in pitifully under-resourced schools as it is 'gradually phased in' (e.g. Crewe, 1997; Fox et al., 2002; Mlungwana, 2001; Sloth-Nielsen, 2005).

I refer to this 'issue' cursorily to underline how closely the sexual lives of children are placed under surveillance/protection by legislative matrices of children's rights and custodians' responsibilities (towards children). As Sloth-Nielsen (2005) argues, the ratification of UNICEF's *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (circa 1994, see Chapter 3) preceded a flurry of post-apartheid constitutional legislation about children's rights to information on sexual health/risk. For example, The *National Education Policy Act* (1996) entrenches all learners' rights to life skills training and HIV/Aids education on risk-reduction; as well as rights-based access to 'safe school environments' and protection against discrimination on the basis of HIV+ status. This implicates a strong discourse of 'social ownership of children', and rights-based custodial flexibility of domestic/educative arrangements for

children, counters more outmoded 'nuclear' concepts of parental power and absolute control of (and 'access' to) biological offspring (cf. Sloth-Nielsen, 2005).

As Foucault (1978) would undoubtedly see/say: such shifting (domestic/educative) arrangements *still* place sex and reproductive health and risk as central axes of (neo-liberal) governmental subjectification; but direct/exclusive parent-child implantation theories that might have applied decades ago are difficult to apply in a multi-influential matrix of authoritative sexualized knowing and experience (cf. Richter, 1994). This does not, in any way, let parents off the hook; indeed, it hooks them into the governmental functioning of 'sex education' even more inexorably (as *loveLife* suggests, in the next section). In keeping with other contexts (e.g. Britain: Wyness, 2000), the ideals of schools-based curricula of life skills and HIV/Aids education have produced opportunities for (usually resource-poor) parents to shrug off responsibilities for 'talking about sex', to schools (Mbetse, 2001).

While more resource-rich (white) schools always already had forms of life skills and sex instructional curricula – timetabled as rudimentary or systematic 'guidance' periods – poorer and rural schools had nothing and this curricular, infra-structural and personnel capacity has had to be established from scratch, and without separate budget allocations for this from the Department of Education (Campbell, 2003). Thus, early and fairly anecdotal empirical indicators from such schools suggest a chaotic and floundering system. Monitoring of youthful responses to HIV/Aids in poorer rural sentinel sites in 2000-1 showed no evidence of *any* formal curricula at schools, at any level, in place yet (Kelly, 2000; Kelly & Parker, 2001a, 2001b). Campbell and MacPhail's (2003b) investigation of social capital embedding youth in Summertown (urban Gauteng mining community), found due to lack of funds to appoint specialized life skills coordinators, the responsibilities fell to under-trained, over-worked, stricter, older teachers of large classes of learners; who resorted to didactic, abstract, biological-fact approaches that brooked no discussion of 'real sexual issues', 'relationships' or 'feelings'. This recreated the authoritarian content and repressive emotional atmosphere that fabricated sex as 'naughty' in family homes.

Thus, where such State facilitation of schools-based curricula is found to be in shambles, mothers are harnessed as default relay points, and re-responsibilized to take on sex pedagogization of children, to preserve social tranquility and sexual health safety in times of epidemic.

## 6. *LOVELIFE*: THE POLITICS OF POSITIONING AND EVALUATION

### Conditions of manufacture: funding and aims

*loveLife* was launched as a national mass communications campaign in South Africa in 1999 with seed-funding from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (USA), as: 'a deliberate departure from traditional 'do or die' approaches to HIV-prevention, relying on a combination of commercial brand marketing and public health techniques to promote a new healthy lifestyle among the 12-17 year old target group' (Stadler & Hlongwa, 2002, p. 366). Stadler and Hlongwa's reflective monitoring progress document on *loveLife*'s first 3 years of operation, claims that *loveLife* is guided by a (seemingly renewable) 5-year strategy to reduce the youth rate of HIV-infection and teenage pregnancy by half, via (p. 366):

1. Initiation of a 'national conversation' about the *loveLife* brand and to 'excite youthful imagination' about *loveLife*;
2. Guiding this national dialogue towards adolescent sex and sexuality, generating communication about sex among youth, with additional emphasis on inter-generational communication; and
3. Making explicit the link between sexual behaviour and HIV-risk.

I return to the issue of the *loveLife*-branding shortly. *loveLife*'s (2004) most recent monitoring-progress report gives account of its web-like governmental operation – in terms of (a) its sprawling campaigning elements as rhizomes, incorporating multi-mediated channels, service initiatives and outreach activities (see above); (b) establishment of strategic health organizational and corporate partnerships; and (c) acquiring massive funding from various institutionalized sources. These partnerships tend to congeal and dissolve opportunistically, but in 2003, *loveLife* programming was said to be implemented by a

consortium of South African public health organizations, viz. *Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa*, *Health Systems Trust*, and the *Reproductive Health Research Unit*, University of the Witwatersrand - in coalition with more than 140 community-based, health-focused, non-governmental organizations across South Africa (*loveLife*, 2004).

Budgets tend not to be transparently discussed in the public domain, but Coulson (2002) estimated that in 2001, *loveLife* operated off a R200 million per annum budget,<sup>26</sup> with approximately 50% media-spend (e.g. radio, television, billboards, print supplements, etc.). The *loveLife* CEO is quick to point out that this means 50% of the budget is spent on community activation programming other than mass media communications, in keeping with the *Ottawa Charter* (D. Harrison, 2002a). Given the 'controversies' over *loveLife*'s outside media (billboard) campaign in particular (see below), it has emerged that some funding is 'conditional'. For example, the South African State Government subsidization of *loveLife* (R75 million over 3 years, 2001-4, recently renewed) is limited to specific community-participation and health infrastructural-development projects, e.g. *groundBreakers* (a peer-education, opinion-leaders project in schools), *NAFCI* (*National Adolescent Friendly Clinic Initiative* in resource-poor communities) and the *loveGames* (a series of sports events, nationwide) (Delate, 2003) – and does not fund billboards.

### Branding as subject positioning

*loveLife*'s 'branding' is said to couple a sexual health campaign to 'youth-culture' (see Chapter 1 and above) through marketing 'positive sexuality' as a pivotal healthy lifestyle choice – from a smorgasbord of other choices and opportunities - that become available to upwardly mobile, entrepreneurial subjects of neo-liberal capitalism (Posel, 2004). This branded lifestyle (as subject positioning) implicates wily sexual responsibilities (e.g. talking about sex, condom-use, even abstinence); but also fabricates sassy and strongly sexualized identities through youthful consumption of particular clothes, leisure activities, jargonized language, music, cell-phones, media, etc. As I have suggested, *loveLife*'s campaigning incorporates youth-targeted and parent-targeted vortices of elements – and this thesis finds



itself in the (inter-subjective) interstices between these. My analytic interest in the aggressive *loveLife* branding of 'youth-culture' is thus twofold.

First, such positioning of youth appears to call forth particular parental subjectivities and practices as injunctions. My analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 focuses on the crystallization of such positions and imperatives, and then how hapless parents are schooled in 'talking about sex' (to discourage sexual activity) with *loveLife*-branded youth who are suspicious of parents, unwilling to engage, knowledgeable about sex, and strongly sexualized subjects. Second, youth-culture branded *loveLife* materials appear to undermine their own authority as trustworthy, reliable parenting expertise with South African parents (see Chapter 8). In this way, one element of *loveLife* campaigning seems to undercut another, inter-textually. Recognition of such branded knowledge, or 'signature' as the authority/authorship of 'knowing' (Kamuf, 1988), is evoked in the ways in which *loveLife* 'evaluates' impacts of its campaigning; and I will mention this below, specifically in relation to their intergenerational communication campaign – *Love them enough to talk about sex*.

'Branding' is a concept from marketing and advertising, referring to particular processes of encoding and commodifying 'products' - here, 'a lifestyle', 'a sexual self' - to render them appealing and attractive to decoders/buyers as subjects (Thomas, 2004). I will link this to Althusser's (1971) notion of interpellation, as (ideological) hailing, persuasion or collusion of subjects, in Chapter 5. De Chernatony and McDonald (1992) see 'a brand' as an easily identifiable category of object/person, with which a buyer/user identifies because the unique benefits they purvey are perceived to match their 'needs' most closely (p. 18). In (Foucauldian governmental) health promotion discourse, the health promoter attaches (within the branding/discursive process) symbolic values, information and risks to sexualized actions, to enable the docile subject to (suddenly) apprehend their situation/self from the branded position or perspective. This does not work through incorporation of the individualized subject's real, nuanced, contextualized life-world (cf. *Soul City's* 'edutainment', or *AmaQhawe* micro-media, above); but as a flash of aspirational recognition of something 'other', 'ideal' or 'desired'. De Chernatony and McDonald explain

that a brand should thus be highly visible, repetitive to the point of emptiness over a sustained period, and instantly recognizable - as in stereotyping.

As Delate's (2001) trenchant semiotic analysis of the *loveLife* billboards reveals, the *loveLife*-brand connects an aspirational youthful identity in a New South Africa - positive sexuality, positive (informed) lifestyle choices, positive hope for a classy (HIV-free) future, encoded into a series of images - to the imperative action-marker: '*talk about it*'. This branded injunction metonymically calls up the associated lifestyle; with 'it' (euphemistically, metonymically) standing in place of sex, sexuality, sexual health, sexual risk, (unsexy) HIV/Aids, sexual rights, sexual needs, sexual deeds, and safer sex (cf. Delate, 2001). The ordinary young discussants in Delate's reception study of the 2001 billboard-campaign, *His and Hers*, (a) broadly articulated 'what *loveLife* was on about' (brand), but (b) could not make meaningful connections between the images depicted on billboards (interlocking jigsaw puzzle pieces, stick figures of men and women, the words *his and hers*), HIV/Aids awareness and risk-reduction strategies. The billboards contained no information-traces save '*loveLife, talk about it*' (brand) and *thethaJunction* toll-free helpline number (advertisement for service).

Delate concludes that the billboards, as stand-alone texts addressing young people, were 'virtually undecipherable' and as such, a 'waste of money' - a view shared by many others (e.g. Coulson, 2002; Parker, 2003; Thomas, 2004). The billboards gained meaning through intellectualized 'sharp readings'; that is, read inter-textually in relation with the proliferating postmodern apparatus of *loveLife* multi-media messaging. Articulating the public health pragmatist view on mass communication, Coulson (2002) finds the *loveLife* brand ('*talk about it*') used interchangeably with messaging about HIV/Aids awareness. This lack of differentiation between concepts, media products and impacts, she argues, is reflected in the blurry way *loveLife* campaigning is evaluated.

I have mentioned aspects related to *loveLife* evaluation in the previous section, where impacts of youth- and parent-targeted campaigning on communication about sex with parents/children, were looped back (causally) to *loveLife*-brand awareness. *loveLife*'s CEO,

David Harrison (2002a), makes several (defensive) points about this branding/evaluation strategy that have some bearing on my own (narrow sliced) analyses that follow later on. First, *loveLife* does not use all media channels in the same way to inscribe instructional messaging; and they intentionally and constantly inter-refer. This fabricates users' cascading attention between media-sources to augment meaning/practice. For example, *television* fills in the details that relate directly to people's lives; *radio* has a wider reach, and is more 'interactive'; *print* is suited to complex messaging in that it can be kept, re-read, digested, discussed; and billboards 'position the brand' and advertise *loveLife* services (p. 79).

Second, *loveLife* is strategically committed to evaluation of 'effects' of its mass communication campaigning and outreach activities overall, as a whole, on an annual basis. But this brand-awareness – for example, recognition, loyalty or trust of branded messaging, and improved persuasiveness – develops over a period of time, rendering separate impacts (on knowledge, behaviour, attitudes) of channels, products, brand and messages, indistinguishable.

#### Hostile evaluations from 'outside' *loveLife*

From a cultural/media studies or discourse theory position, I have empathy for *loveLife*'s dispositif (discursive apparatus) of governmental representations in multi-layered matrices of implantation or interpellation, or a McLuhanian meaning-machine of 'media-flow' between disjunctive technical genres, and 'media-mosaic' as imploded bits of knowledge/narrative in disparate programming (McLuhan, 1994). But, the ferocious urgency, direness and competitiveness of the HIV/Aids force field in South Africa has meant that *loveLife* has causally cobbled 'representations' (signs, brand) to 'behaviour' (directly measurable effects). For example, *loveLife*'s in-house monitoring and evaluation industry churns out brand-successes (e.g. youthful awareness of *loveLife* programming increased from 62% in 2001, to 85% in 2003), thereby to claim responsibility for the decline in HIV-infections among 15-19 year olds (Pettifor et al., 2004). In public health discourse, such slipshod claims-making has been received with positivistic disdain from other health researchers, activists and agencies.

*loveLife's* commitment to outdated (direct effects and cognitive) models of information-driven behavioural change, through individualistic decision-making and 'informed choice', have been widely castigated as useless within the skewed classed/gendered power relations that embed youth sex in particular contexts (e.g. Bhana et al., 2004; Campbell & MacPhail, 2003a; Coulson, 2002; Kelly et al., 2001; Makgetla, 2005; Parker, 2003, 2004, 2005b; Singer, 2005; Thomas, 2004; Usdin, 1998).

However, Warren Parker of *CADRE* has possibly formulated the most sustained and reasoned response to the '*loveLife* propaganda' directed at funders and the general public – on methodological (Parker, 2003, 2004; see also Kelly et al., 2001) and ideological grounds (Parker, 2005a, 2005b). Parker accuses *loveLife* of 'crisis-mongering' – of *misrepresenting* selective, antiquated or plain wrong 'empirical facts' (sans caveats) about HIV/Aids in South Africa – thereby to fabricate through moral panic, a grim, hopeless scenario that only *their* branded interventions can ameliorate (Parker, 2005a). Parker (2003) disputes (unavailable or non-existent) baseline research or pre-testing reception research of media products; (urban-skewed) sampling; and the veracity and stake of many statistics of youth deviance and passivity that are routinely re-cycled in *loveLife* print supplements. Furthermore, *loveLife's* interventions are anecdotally monitored through internal structures, evaluated through forced-choice survey questionnaires, and versions of these reports are selectively available in the public domain (Kelly et al., 2001). Thus, *loveLife* postures as a messianic saviour, which eclipses the compound forces within a matrix of parallel interventions (cf. Makgetla, 2005).

I return to such power issues in claims-making in Chapter 6, examining how scientificity is implicated in persuasiveness of preferred positioning for mothers in the *Lovelines* texts. However, these issues haunted my attempts at reviewing empirical literature on the *loveLife* parent-targeted campaign, *Love them enough to talk about sex* – for several (seemingly related) reasons. Critical commentary from public agencies external-to-*loveLife* (e.g. journalistic, activist, academic) on this wing of the campaign was virtually non-existent. Seemingly *all* fervour and outrage is directed towards the highly visible, expensive,

notoriously prurient and cryptic outdoor media (billboards) element – not reviewed in this thesis.<sup>27</sup> This effectively meant that the only available reflective voice on *Love them enough to talk about sex* was *loveLife*-generated, and available in disconcertingly disjunctive bits on the *loveLife* website. Apart from downloadable ‘supplements’ and monitoring reports, much of this material was seemingly packaged for instructing random (panicky) parental traffic, rather than for (skeptical) academic or social scientific audiences.

### Love them enough to talk about sex

This thesis incorporates ‘readings’ – mine and parents’ – of *Lovelines*, a textual series of 17 fortnightly ‘columns’ formulated and branded by *loveLife*, that appeared in a national women’s magazine, *Fairlady*, during 2000 (see Chapter 5 for details on *Fairlady*’s ‘footprint’ and psycho-graphic profile). This constituted an element of *loveLife*’s parent-targeted campaign, *Love them enough to talk about sex* – which was active between 1999 and 2001.

David Harrison (2002a), *loveLife* CEO, explains that the *loveLife* imperative, ‘talk about it’, refers to a ‘communication construct’ about youthful sex and sexuality involving (a) positive motivation for the future; (b) values of informed choice, shared responsibility and positive sexuality; and (c) encouragement of risk-reductive behaviour (p. 79). This communication construct was apparently based on review of South African and international literature on mediators of youth risk (e.g. Grunseit et al., 1997; *loveLife*, 2000b); and, the group discussions baseline research (as absent traces: see above). As Harrison (2002a) argues, the communication construct is a pivotal feature in encouraging young people to delay having sex and to assert sexual limits as first, most important options; and then to practice safer sex, including condom use, and to have fewer partners.

A crucial (governmental) part of this ‘encouragement’ towards delayed sex is considered to be intergenerational communication about sex – between parents and children – in families; hence, the *Love them enough to talk about sex* campaign. Harrison (2002a) selects the following elements, phases, events and indicators of this campaign’s successes for years

2000-2 (p. 79), which I have embellished slightly through access to allied versions of *loveLife* reports:<sup>28</sup>

1. A series of 10 full-page *advertisements in national Sunday newspapers*, featuring prominent South African celebrity endorsements - Nelson Mandela; Archbishop Tutu; Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang; cricketer Jonty Rhodes, etc. – as parents themselves, and appealing to readers to talk openly with their children about sex;
2. A series of advertisements in newspapers and magazines, and *billboards* – *Be More Open* – that explicitly signposted the *loveLife Parentline*, a toll-free helpline, offering counsel and advice to parents on parenting and how to talk about sensitive topics; 15 000 calls were taken per month on this *Parentline* during 2001/2;
3. Two *print supplements* on parental communication about sex with ‘teenagers’ had been produced in 2000; and during 2001/2 further copies/versions were printed and distributed as follows: (1) *Talking and listening, parents and teenagers together – Find out how to make it easier* (*loveLife* 2000c; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, *loveLife*, 2002b) – 1 370 000 copies; (2) *Love them enough to talk about sex* (*loveLife*, 2000b) – 260 000 copies. Distribution via *Sunday Times*, *Sowetan*, *Citizen*, *Youth-centres*, *NAFCI clinics*, *Parentline* and website requests.
4. A discussion on the *Love them enough to talk about sex* campaign in the South African Parliament during 2001, which resulted in a statement of endorsement by President Thabo Mbeki about the importance of parental communication about sex with children;
5. Upward of 20 *radio talkshows* were dedicated to this campaign alone.

Wily readers might have noticed the absence from this list of ‘successful’ campaign elements of the *Lovelines* series, in *Fairlady*, and the preoccupation of this thesis and the last 5 years of my intellectual life. It is with wryness that I report that this *loveLife* project was expunged from any mention in the annual monitoring or progress reports – as if the 17 columns did not exist or happen. The reasons given for this (disconcerting) purging of official record

were (a) it was a minor part of a bigger campaign, and (b) 'it didn't work' and was discontinued before the end of its contracted run (see Chapter 1 & Appendix 2).<sup>29</sup> Thus, not only does this thesis break ranks with *loveLife* evaluation policy that is committed to global impacts of the whole campaign by focusing on one of its 'parts' (*Lovelines*); it also focuses on a discarded part that 'didn't work', precisely because this seemed to expose white knuckles and broken joints of power around implantation of sex into young people through families.

The *loveLife* parent-campaign, *Love them enough to talk about sex*, which was accorded fairly high profile during 2000/2 in annual activities and progress reports (e.g. *loveLife*, 2003; Stadler & Hlongwa, 2002), and the inclusion of parental respondents in the *2001 National Survey of South African Youth* (*loveLife*, 2002a); but appears to have virtually petered out. The last available report, *Lovelife 2003: Report on activities and progress* (*loveLife*, 2004) mentioned the annual number of calls to *Parentline* in a table that included *thethaJunction* calls (p. 11), and included a picture of an unspecified billboard with the slogan *Love them enough to talk about sex* (p. 14).

I have set out the findings of the attitudinal survey of parents (*loveLife*, 2002a) – regarding talking (or not) to their children about sex – in an earlier section of this chapter. My literature review also showed similar, simplistic over-dramatization of parental 'refusal' to talk about sex with children, without closer theoretical analytics of how penetration by, and persuasion to, currently dominant psychological and public health messaging by media works. For example, Posel (2004), referring nonspecifically to vituperative backlashes against 'openness of sex talk' discourses from 'predictable places' - e.g. religious individuals or organizations, protesting letters to newspapers, diatribes on radio talk shows – speaks of '*widespread robust resistance* from parents unaccustomed to having such conversations with their children' (p. 59, my emphasis). This implies that prissy parents simply do not talk about sex. I pick up such 'resistances' in my analyses of parents discoursing sex communication in the home (Chapter 8) – and find, rather than flat and robust refusals, a complexly negotiated 'buy in' to the general idea, and partial performance thereof within the peculiar nooks and crannies of their own lives.

My own published writing on such 'sexual health education' manuals on parent communication with young people (Wilbraham, 2002, 2004a, 2004b) – regarding *loveLife* materials in particular - have wrestled with the dominance of western psy-complex assumptions about sexualized subjectivities (for example, storm-and-stress and psychoanalytic discourses), and 'behaviour change' (information-driven). Without rejecting such truths out of hand, I ask how and why these 'fit' into South African contexts of economic, cultural and sexual heterogeneity (Wilbraham, 2005, in press). This 'fitting' has added governmental desperation in an age of epidemic, where parental technologies of sexual communication are reproduced as a panicky social responsabilization to keep children HIV-free. These questions are continued in the chapters that follow.

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<sup>1</sup> The author 'Parker' referred to throughout this chapter on South African HIV/Aids discourse is Warren Parker, from the Centre of Aids Development Research and Evaluation (CADRE), e.g. Parker (2005a).

<sup>2</sup> Posel (2004) attends to spectacular display of 'sexy blackness' in post-apartheid media discourse in this regard. This is read against the previous apartheid-regime, which sought to 'protect the purity of the white body and the civilized and moral way of life' (p. 54) through repressive sexual censorship, prohibition of sex across racial lines and outlawing of miscegenation. Thus, typical colonial anxieties about rapacious/fertile black sexuality were 'defended against' through (discriminatory) institutionalized apparatuses of laws, courts, education and health/welfare systems (cf. Stoler, 1995); and seemingly 'reversed' through liberation in 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Mills (1997) tracks these uses and aftermaths in writings that variously unpack/explain oppression and racism of the Other, in postcolonial frame (see Bhabha, 1994; McClintock, 1995; Said, 1995; Stoler, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> *Antenatal prevalence statistics* emit annually from the Department of Health (in keeping with WHO and UNAids indicators), and include tallies of sexually active, pregnant women who test positive for HIV and syphilis, while attending 400 public (primary health care) clinics in selected rural, peri-urban and urban sentinel sites. These pregnant women are classed 'poor', thus unable to utilize private healthcare facilities or doctors. The tallies exclude women who practice unprotected sex, but are not fertile; and also exclude men.

<sup>5</sup> Antenatal statistics also display significant local variability: in 2003, 13.5% of women (all age categories) attending antenatal clinics in the Western Cape tested HIV+, while 37.5% of women in KwaZulu-Natal – the province in which I live – tested HIV+ (Health Systems Trust, 2005). These provincial variations are said to be due to such factors as rural/urban ratios of population density, levels of income per capita, acculturated/racialized norms of sexual practice (e.g. 'Coloured' versus 'African/Zulu'), differentially resourced provincial budgets for health services, localized histories of internecine political strife, labour migration (of men) into urban centres, etc. (e.g. Harrison, 2005).



<sup>6</sup> An estimated 30% of HIV+ pregnant women will transmit their sero-positivity to their babies; although these projected rates of transmission do not factor in *Nevirapine*-treatment being (experimentally) rolled out in selected public hospitals (Department of Health, 2005, p. 11).

<sup>7</sup> *Population surveys* are conducted by public-funded research institutions, and routinely include assessment of behavioural risk (self-report) and/or sero-prevalence screening of representative samples from class/race-stratified sentinel sites (see Shishana & Simbayi, 2002; Pettifor et al., 2004).

<sup>8</sup> This referred to the *Global Fund for HIV/Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria*, which controversially awarded *loveLife* almost 100 million US dollars in 2003 (see section below: *Love them enough to talk about sex*).

<sup>9</sup> KAPB as in Knowledge-Attitudes-Perceptions-Behaviour surveys; and KAP as in Knowledge-Attitudes-Practices surveys.

<sup>10</sup> Kelly et al.'s (2001) review, commissioned of their organization, CADRE (Centre for Aids Development and Research Evaluation), by *Save the Children (UK)*, includes more than 200 African studies on youth, HIV/Aids and mass communication, along KAPB and other lines of force. This review presents overall commentary as well as following a particular critical argument – backed up with their research studies in classed and rural/urban South African sentinel sites – against the figuring of youth as (universally) sexually active, irresponsible and non-responsive to the HIV/Aids epidemic.

<sup>11</sup> This is akin to the points made by Patton (1996), regarding risk-ghettos and collapsing youth into the community spaces and neighbourhoods they occupy: see Chapter 1.

<sup>12</sup> Cognitive limitations of adolescence are said to include, for example, a trial-and-error mentality – inability to (hypothetically) anticipate consequences of actions without concretized/physical experience (e.g. Arnett, 2004; Berk, 2005), which implies that impulsive action may lead to thinking afterwards, rather than thinking guiding reflective/reasonable action. Neo-Piagetian David Elkind (1985) conceives the egocentrism of early adolescents (in America) – within its two related aspects of 'imaginary audience' and 'personal fable' – as thinking that is preoccupied with themselves and about how others might think about them (perspective-taking). Such self-consciousness is widely taken to underpin both conformity to normative peer pressure (e.g. mimic peers to avoid scrutiny and ridicule), and the unshakeable belief in the uniqueness of 'the self' and personal experience (e.g. knowledge of risks, but 'it will not happen to me').

<sup>13</sup> Such constructions abound in international literatures – European, American and Australian – with HIV/Aids represented in terms of 'scientificity', 'medicalization', or 'homophobia' (e.g. Lupton, 1999a; Miller et al., 1998; Patton, 1990a, 1990b, 1993; Tulloch & Lupton, 1997; Wilton, 1997); or those living with HIV/Aids as 'Other' (e.g. Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001; Joffe, 1998, 1999; Sontag, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Coulson (2002) refers to these strategic operations to effect behaviour change as the 'Johns Hopkins P-Process', viz. (1) establish baseline levels, (2) develop/encode materials to persuade, influence and impact in a particular way, (3) pre-test and re-encode, (4) implement on wider scale, (5) measure pre-defined indicators to assess if it 'worked', and (6) plan for continuity and sustained change (p. 7).

<sup>15</sup> This is also witnessed as international calls for re-orientations of HIV/Aids research, evaluations of complex interventions, and theorization, to accommodate the dynamics of 'advanced epidemic' in resource-poor contexts seriously infected/affected by heterosexually transmitted HIV/Aids (e.g. Caldwell, 1995; Gagnon & Parker, 1995; Moatti & Souteyrand, 2000; R Parker, 1995; R. Parker & Aggleton, 2003; Shapiro, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Complex, multi-faceted intervention designs are framed within the *World Health Organization's* global guidelines of the 1986 *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* that inscribed a shift away from individualistic, hypodermic-syringe models of input/output, towards mobilization and sustaining of 'enabling environments' for health. This incorporates direct, lived experience of (a) access to reliable

knowledges about action; (b) interactive skills-development; (c) user-friendly health services (and affordable treatment); (d) community action against deleterious norms; and (e) State policy implementation in terms of 'rights' and rights-education (e.g. UN Convention for Rights of the Child, National Policy on HIV/Aids and Education, new legal definitions of 'rape', etc.) (cf. Coulson, 2002; Kelly et al., 2001).

<sup>17</sup> Collins and Hoosen (2004), for example, illustrate critical position (b), and (unwittingly) the paradoxes of this position. Based on interviews/discussions about knowledge, attitudes and sexual practices with rural Zulu-speaking women, they pronounce unspecific/generic mass mediated communications 'useless' because these women (1) possessed inaccurate biomedicalized knowledge about HIV-transmission, and (2) were not performing risk reductive sexual practice. This slides into direct-effects, hyperdermic-syringe information-based assumptions about 'media' that valorize individual, cognitive decision-making, without exploring what particular mass mediated programming (if any) these women had had access to; and how they coordinated possibly discrepant health beliefs with biomedicalized truths.

<sup>18</sup> The successful impacts of *Soul City's* award-winning mass mediated materials in South Africa (see Coulson, 2002; Mathews, 2005; Scheepers et al., 2004; Soul City, 2001a & 2001b) are explained through *Soul City's* attention to, for example, constructive 'pro-social' role-modeling, problem-solving and coping within ordinary real-life situations, and non-didactic formats that invite identification and reflection – at individual, inter-personal and community-of-practice levels (Kelly et al., 2001, p. 41).

<sup>19</sup> Kelly's (2000) study explored (*inter alia*) responses to a nationally mass mediated, purposive, HIV-prevention campaign: (the State HIV/Aids and STD Directorate, Department of Health's) *Beyond Awareness' ABC - Abstain, Be faithful, Condomize*. Kelly found that in complex, modern media environments, 'effects' of (encoded) messaging do not emerge in clearly measurable ways. Thus, participants in some sentinel sites spontaneously recalled the condom-use element in the *ABC*-campaign, and reported (sometimes, if sexually active) acquiring/using a condom (p. 33-6). But they did not spontaneously recall either faithfulness or abstention messaging. Amongst sexually active youth, the prevalence of having more than one current sexual partner was high at 31% (p. 37). Although sex/partnership avoidance was mentioned, many participants were confused about whether their own sexualized practices constituted 'abstention' or not.

<sup>20</sup> Ziehl (2003) explains the relatively high South African statistic for 'living singly' (17%) as due to an aberration of the 1996 census data that counted live-in domestic workers – that is, African women who lived alone in separate quarters at their white employers' residences, away from their own families – as 'singles'.

<sup>21</sup> Simkins (1986) argued for the dominance among poor African communities of this protean family arrangement - mother-headed (nuclear by erratic financial and sexual default), single-parented, semi-extended households – estimated to constitute 33% of households in urban areas, and 67% in rural areas; with an estimated 30% of working men living apart from their families, and 25% of children under 15 years living apart from their mothers *and* fathers (in extended or other custodial arrangements).

<sup>22</sup> Terre Blanche (2004) notes that in South Africa, as elsewhere, poverty is unevenly distributed; but colonial and apartheid histories have reproduced the higher likelihood of poverty among 'black people' than white, with 37% surviving on less than R1000 per month, in small, overcrowded houses with inadequate food, water, sanitation and electrification. Such poverty is more severe and widespread in rural areas; and the poverty rate for female-headed single-parented households is much higher (60%) than for male-headed nuclear households (30%) (p. 263).

<sup>23</sup> Crewe (2002), writing impressionistically about South African university students, argues that young people have been paralyzed by didactic anti-sex/risk pedagogies (inscribing abstinence) and parental suspicion (of rampant youth sexualities). This has contributed to the positioning of young

people as 'naughty', 'deceitful', 'irresponsible', 'out of control', risk-saturated' and 'in denial'. Calls to re-sexualize the epidemic work with this very idea: that constant recycling of youth deficit/risk through scare tactics and stereotypes ignores agency and power in decision-making about sex (e.g. Berger, 2005; Crewe, 2002; Frizelle, 2005); and ignores positive, collective youthful responses to risk (Kelly, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> These stereotyped perceptions of 'risk groups' have some basis in epidemiological reality; there lies the rub. As was evident earlier in the Chapter, the *Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/Aids* (household survey) established HIV-prevalence in the general population, by race, as follows: 18.4% Africans testing HIV+, 6.2% whites, 6.6% Coloureds and 1.8% Indians (Shishana & Simbayi, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> This is taken elsewhere as evidence of mass media penetration. Thus, even in remote rural areas, parents know they *should* talk to their children about sex; but are unable to reconcile this western dictum with existing health beliefs that talking about sex causes early sex and promiscuity (Kelly & Ntlabati, 2002; Kelly & Parker, 2001b).

<sup>26</sup> Corporate funding in 2003 was provided by the Kaiser Family Foundation (R120 million); the Gates Foundation; the South African Government (R75 million over 3 years, 2001-4); the Global Fund for HIV/Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (80-million US dollars over 5 years, 2003-7, with an additional 12-million in 2003); the Nelson Mandela Foundation; Anglo-American Chairman's Fund; and Vodacom (Parker, 2003). Various other corporate partners – like South African Airways, Independent Newspaper Group, and the South African Broadcasting Corporation – lend 'in-kind' support.

<sup>27</sup> For discussion of various aspects of *loveLife*-billboards, see: Coulson (2002); Delate (2001, 2003); Halperin & Williams (2001); D. Harrison (2002b); *loveLife* (2004); Makgetla (2005); Mbali (2005); Parker (2003, 2005b); Posel (2004); Singer (2005); Thomas (2004).

<sup>28</sup> It is noted that Harrison (2002a) is quoting 'monitoring data' on *Love them enough to talk about sex* from the *loveLife 2001: Report on activities and progress* (Stadler, 2001; and a 3-year version: Stadler & Hlongwa, 2002), and the *loveLife 2002: Report on activities and progress* (published later as *loveLife*, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> An excised 'institutional ethnography' chapter examined the tangled forces of production and discontinuation of the *Lovelines* series, in the interstices between *Fairlady* and *loveLife*. This will be developed for publication elsewhere.

## CHAPTER 5

### FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSES, SUBJECT POSITIONING AND STATUSES OF DISCOURSE

#### 1. LOCATING FOUCAULT IN THE DISCOURSE-MACHINE

##### *Analyses of discourse/s*

This thesis implicates 'Foucauldian' readings that are anchored to a particular set of didactic, health promotion media texts, *Lovelines*, on motherly communication with children about sex. *Lovelines* was a textual series fabricated in the media institutional interstices between *loveLife* (see Chapter 4), and *Fairlady*, a national South African women's magazine (see below). This is not a formal evaluation of *loveLife*'s purposive campaigning, *Fairlady*, or the *Lovelines* series. My readings unpack the ways that (1) *Lovelines* texts persuasively address (white) middle classed mothers, to direct them towards particular (disciplinary) subject positions in relation to expert discourses of childrearing and risk-safety from HIV/Aids (Chapters 6 & 7); and (2) parents talk about their own communicative practice (about sex) in families in relation to these *Lovelines* texts (Chapter 8). Mothering is seen as 'governed' – through didactic media discourse/texts (cf. Foucault's 'statements') - within this matrix of encoding and decoding of expertise (cf. Fairclough, 1995a).

Such discourse analytical tasks require fleet footwork within what Hepburn and Potter (2003) have called 'the slippery intellectual geography of discourse analysis' (p. 181). 'Discourse analysis' – as ways of reading the (linguistic, rhetorical, textual, contextual, interactive, subjective, ideological, etc.) operations of language – is (now) a highly ambiguous and over-determined category. Even plotting a 'Foucauldian' discourse analytical course is fraught with fractures, frissons and footing in counter-currents of influence and applications of ideas (as lenses, tools, tactics) to particular tasks and territories, and to particular statuses of discourse-as-data (cf. Wetherell, 2001a).

This 'methodology' chapter holds steady the focus on Foucault-inscribed discourse analytic endeavour – particularly related to unpacking the conditions of being 'subjected' in, by or through discourse/s, as subject positioning - and sets the broader scene of epistemological logomachies, even within single author's approach/es and bodies of work, for closer attention to my own deployment of 'methods' of discourse-generation and 'techniques' of discourse-decomposition. I have already reviewed the conceptual foundations of Foucault's work – of power, discourses, sexuality, surveillance, subjectivities, discipline, government and risk-security - that have influenced the constitution of 'talking about sex in families' in this thesis (see Chapter 2). As I argued, the elision of Foucault's archival methodologies from those shifting concepts is spurious; the theoretical ideas were hewn with particular 'tools', in particular conditions of possibility, and retooling constituted theoretical shifts (or vice versa).

The influential place of 'discourse theory', and 'analysis of discourses' (as method) in the social sciences has been attributed to Foucault (e.g. Fairclough, 1992; Howarth, 2000; Parker, 1992; Rose, 1990). Foucauldian versions of discourse analysis are understood to have been inscribed onto western psychology (in Britain at least) in the late 1970s, largely through the influential journal *Ideology & Consciousness*, and Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine's (1984) book *Changing the Subject* (Willig, 2001).<sup>1</sup> Such writing – part of an 'interpretive turn' (to language) within a broader rubric of social constructionism (Burr, 1995) – explored the relationship between power, discourse and subjectivity to critically examine the constitution of childhood, mothering, gender differences, racism, and so on, that psychological institutions sought to explain, normalize, regulate, and so discipline and govern.

### Which Foucault?

But such eager import of Foucault raises questions, and hackles. The most obvious question is 'which Foucault' is imported? There is general consensus among proliferating commentators on Foucault's work that his 'perspective' shifts historically (e.g. Dean, 1994b;

Dews, 1987; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Fraser, 1989; Howarth, 2000; Kendall & Wickham, 1999; McNay, 1994; Mills, 1997; Tamboukou, 2003).<sup>2</sup> Thus, although 'discourse' and 'subjects' remain constant presences, their status and powers blur and transform, as do their tactics of capture. The rather cryptic folding of Foucauldian theorization offered in Chapter 2 might be genealogically elaborated into particular discursive or epistemic sites of struggle, as follows (cf. Dews, 1987):

- *Early 'archaeological work' on truth* (e.g. Foucault, 1965, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1976, 1984c), largely written against dominant French philosophies of phenomenology, hermeneutics and existentialism of the 1950s and 1960s, where his 'structuralist' types of discourse - as discursive formations and epistemes - appeared as rules/conditions for constituting truthful knowledge statements;
- *Middle 'genealogical studies' on power* (e.g. Foucault, 1977, 1978, 1982, 1984a, 1984b, 1991a, 1991b), which embraced post-structuralism as a tactic of resistance towards emancipatory (scientific or rational) 'truth' of classical Marxism, and where institutionalized power/knowledge embedded in discourses, produced surveillance (and recalcitrance) of micro-practiced subjectivities; and
- *Later 'ethical work' on selves* (e.g. Foucault, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1991a), where the free-but-responsible citizens of neo-liberal democracies are impelled to constitute themselves as moral subjects of their own actions.

Sensitivity to the contexts of production of Foucault's ideas does not mean that they cannot be imported – as conceptual and/or methodological tools, or as 'histories' – into other contexts (Stoler, 1995); and indeed, put to fruitful use to pursue other discursive arguments and critical agendas, as they have been and are. But such sensitivity should cue reflexivity about the different contexts of appropriation of Foucault's tools – *what* is imported, into *what*, and *why*? This raises ideological and methodological concerns. Stoler, for example, has wondered about powers etched/entrenched in wholesale imposition of a (colonial) historical discourse of sexuality onto ex-colonized contexts (see Chapter 4).

Furthermore, unfolding definitions of the power/s of discourse/s appear in Foucault's work. Within discourse analysis claiming to be 'Foucauldian', 'discourse' might be taken at

its outer limits of meaning, as standing for 'language' - a socially shared semiotic and/or linguistic system of communication, or spoken and written texts (Mills, 1997). Thus, Foucault's tools might be (and have been) uncritically applied to any/all communication or textual material to produce 'themes' - as groupings of statements that are coherent in some way - then haplessly called 'discourses' (cf. Fairclough, 1992; Mills, 1997).<sup>3</sup>

My position is not 'Foucault-purism' as much as critical, witting and strategic eclecticism, which is made explicit. We are not in the business-of-discourse-analysis to produce 'true' analyses, as validation criteria of 'positivist recipes' require; *nor* authentically 'Foucauldian' genealogies per se - but to ask what particular kinds of analysis (and tools) can *do* to unravel truth effects (Wetherell, 1998; Wilbraham, 2004b). Any discourse analytic study will involve restrictions or extensions on what is studied, how and why (Wetherell, 1998). Such deployments involve complex overlays of influences, and tools; shaped in turn by the specific tasks, ends, interests and context (site of discourse/data) to which they are put.

My own fashioning of '*subject positioning*' as a Foucauldian tool in this thesis is the case to point. 'Subject positions' have a long and complex philosophical genealogy (Edley, 2001), but I expediently started with Foucault's shifting praxes of speaking-statuses and spoken-for subjects. From this perspective, discourses (as domains of institutionalized knowledge and practice), through their seeking to govern subjects, produce 'modes for speaking' - positions and statuses within discourse - to take up or to be located in, in various sites (Hall, 1997). Such 'slots' as kinds of person, typical figures or categories of action are understood to scaffold subjectivity through disciplinary power (Parker, 1992). But, within my application to *didactic media discourse*, subject positioning (as a tool) needed to be stretched beyond Foucauldian 'statements', to include practices of textual production and persuasion by expertise (reception), as relational subject positions (inter-subjectivities) were (a) represented in textual practices of address (Fairclough, 1992; Hall, 1997), and (b) negotiated in interactive conversations between real people (Wetherell, 1998).

My explicit concern in this chapter is to 'slow down' subject positioning through adopting a text-by-text, author-by-author, working-tools approach (e.g. Wetherell, Taylor & Yates,

2001a, 2001b). Although broad literatures of discourse-decomposition – and common threads – are drawn in, my aim is to map swerves and implications of Foucauldian hybridization within particular authors' ideas and bodies of analytical work that have inscribed and signposted my own. This pays particular attention to how (Foucauldian) lenses on subject positioning transmute as statuses of discourse shift, e.g. from public domain texts, to interactive discussions.

Argumentation in this chapter is ordered as follows. (1) I begin with brief sketches of Foucault's archaeological and genealogical positions, insofar as these canonically scaffold theorization of 'discourse' and 'subject positions' in this thesis. (2) These ideas about subject positioning are generally mapped (and grafted) onto skirmishes between social psychological 'styles' of discourse analyses, and their particular demarcations of 'analyzable discourse'. (3) Foucauldian subject positioning is then epistemologically unpicked within the oppositional praxes of Hollway, Parker and Wetherell. (4) Finally, the chapter sets up a broad operational blueprint towards particular communicative events, and analyses of them, that follow. It is noted that each analysis chapter begins with further, more technical, exposition of its territories, tools and tactics.

### **Foucault's archaeology: statements and enunciative modalities**

Foucault's (1972) *The archaeology of knowledge* was concerned with formalizing an approach to the discursive structures and systems that govern the production of statements that count as being truthful knowledge, at particular times and institutional locations. For example, the establishment of the clinical gaze (Foucault, 1976), or the dividing practices between in/sanity in the mechanism of the asylum (Foucault, 1965). Archaeological theorization articulates discursive elements of restraint and ordering: the 'episteme' as the dominant system of authorized knowledge circulating within a culture at a specific historicized moment; and 'discourse' as the set of rules and procedures for the production of authorized knowledge (Mills, 1997). The authority of such knowledge works through institutions; for example, the scientific, technical and conceptual ways in which phenomena are made accessible (cf. their 'forms of specification'). In Foucault's (1972) formulation,



discourse refers to 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (p. 49); thus, *procedures* that fabricate effects, rather than something that exists, to be discovered through analysis. Archaeological analysis apprehends the effects of these discursive elements through examination of cohorts of 'statements' within an/the 'archive'.

Foucault is philosophically vague on the 'scientific' matter of what constituted his archive. It appears as the set of historicized, discursive limits in a particular society about what can be truthfully said, remembered and recycled – viz. 'the first law of what can be said' and 'the general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (Foucault, 1972, cited in Fairclough, 1992, p. 107-8). Foucault is frequently figured as 'an archive addict', who haunted the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and *Bibliothèque du Saulchoir* in Paris (Tamboukou, 1999). This invokes an archive as the 'sedimentation' of local records/statements that have been consigned, and manufactured, to appear as traces of historical events (Harris, 2000); and archival analysis involved trawling through hundreds of years of un/published scientific articles, photographs, case files, architectural blueprints, health policy reports, private or official letters, etc.<sup>4</sup> He describes the scholarly work in/with archives as 'a vast accumulation of source material', and 'meticulous and patiently documentary' (Foucault, 1984b, p. 76). Crucially, archaeology was conceived to *describe* discursive events as traces of real social processes and practices in an archive - *not* to 'interpret' texts, *not* to 'judge' practices; thus, *describing* what was sayable/doable, and visible (Kendall & Wickham, 1999).

It should be clear from this that 'the statement' – as the primary practice and force of discourse – is not a simple sentence, conversational utterance or everyday speech act (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Foucault was not concerned with statements themselves (as language, as texts) as much as the 'rules of formation' that governed their production. Thus, statements are understood to have 'institutional force'; they are legitimated through forms of professional authority and expertise; they have 'truth status' in the sense that they are repeatable, verifiable through scientific convention and their imperatives are obeyed (Mills, 1997, p. 61). Such statements are grouped into 'discourses' – as sets of specialized statements that have similar institutional force – further specified by the 'functioning of the

field of use' into which they are inserted and their 'surfaces of emergence', as specific sites in which they are enacted (Foucault, 1972, p. 104), e.g. the legal-welfare document removing a child from the domestic custody of its 'unfit' mother. The articulation of these elements means that 'discourse becomes social practice as *discursive practices*' (Fairclough, 1992, p. 41); and is 'determined by the *outside* arrangements, having material status within particular institutional practices' (p. 48, original emphases).

Crucially then, Foucault's (1972) archaeological model does not deny existence of reality; but asserts that our access to reality and (mostly stable) truth is constituted through the historically conventionalized, hegemonic discourse structures and procedural systems of institutional knowledge/power. Foucault's (1971) influential inaugural lecture at the College de France, *Orders of discourse*, examined the conditions of existence of truth. Here Foucault saw discursive practices working to maintain a systematic and orderly 'will to truth' through various mechanisms of control, e.g. limiting who may speak with authority, demarcating division between scientific truth and falsity, suppressing unreasonable knowledge, the rarefaction of academic discourse, repeating significant statements through commentary, etc. (cf. Hook, 2001a). Such discursive mechanisms of exclusion and circulation operate through sets of statements, which, according to various discursive 'rules of formation', form '*objects*' as entities, '*enunciative modalities*' as subject/speaking positions, '*concepts*' as elements, categories and integrative models, and '*strategies*' as possibilities and options for action (Foucault, 1972, p. 31-9).

Foucault's (1972) 'enunciative modalities' – literally, modes of speaking – concerned the places in discourse, from which statements were articulated by subjects. This rule of formation implicates three levels of positioning (Rzepka, 2004), viz. (a) *who* is speaking?; (b) from what *site* do they speak?; and (c) what is the *relative position* of the speaking subject to objects or other subjects? This refers to the truthful forms in which statements – as types of discursive practice – function in different sites. For example, how 'sex' is spoken in a doctor's diagnosis of a patient's dysfunction, a psychotherapist's interpretation of a dream, a parent talking to a child, a lover's expression of erotic passion. These orders of discourse – the status of truthful knowledge, the positions of authority, the 'surfaces of emergence' –

must be occupied to determine who can speak, with what authority they can speak of which objects, where such speaking can occur, and who the subjects of their speech are. The social subject that produces a statement is not an entity that exists independently as an originator of meaning, but is a function of the statement itself. As Foucault (1972, p. 95-6) argues:

To describe a formulation qua statement does not consist in analyzing the relation between the author and what he (sic) says (or wanted to say, or said without wanting to); but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it.

### Foucault's genealogy: swirling power, confessing subjects

Having established the ordered rules of formation of discourse of his 'archaeology', Foucault's work took a different trajectory. *Discipline and punish* (Foucault, 1977) and *The history of sexuality* (Foucault, 1978) deployed his genealogical approach to account for the proliferation of power, surveillance and regulation in modern societies. Shifts away from the structuralist rule-based production of truth conceptualized a web-like approach to discourse; and closer attention to power as a productive matrix (apparatus or *dispositif*) of 'relations between forces' that produce, constrain and resist truthful effects (Deleuze, 1988; Foucault, 1982). Discourses (plural) appear here as regulated sets of statements within competing power/knowledge matrices.

To capture this swirling, processual web of mutual relations between discourse, power and rival truths, Foucault conceived genealogy as a 'critical' or 'effective' historical methodology that eschewed the totalizing effects of 'traditional history' as a coherent teleological development of knowledge towards truth (Dean, 1994b). Foucault's (1984b) methodological blueprint is set out in the paper *Nietzsche, genealogy, history*. Here, his genealogy seeks to illuminate specific discourses of modern subjectivity through tracking their histories; and these histories appear as results of struggles and domination, accidents, haphazard connections, dispersions, 'minute derivations' or 'complete reversals' (p. 81).

Genealogy is 'problem-based' rather than 'period-based' (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 23); it selects a contemporary problematic, deals with everyday, taken-for-granted phenomena,

and asks how this came to be so. The aim is a diagnosis of the 'history of the present', which mobilizes a 'counter-memory' to recreate the practical conditions of subjects' present existence, and to imagine possibilities for resistance and transformation in the interstice (Tamboukou, 2003, p. 9). Foucault's (1984b) methodological tools seem scanty and unsystematic to contemporary (social scientific) standards, but he does offer 'a set of strategies for research'. I mention two briefly here. (1) *Emergence* refers to a grasp of 'the moment of arising'; the mundane, haphazard and 'accidental' appearance of particular objects of knowledge in a force field (p. 83). This opposes the assumptions of origins as orderly processes of truth, or as great events or epiphanies.

(2) *Descent* is conceived as a tactic of opposition to unification or stability of meaning; and is deployed to unsettle any sense of continuity from past to present. It operates through fragmenting any concepts considered immutable, static or universal (e.g. the body, sexuality, risk), and seeks instead to document how objects form in a profusion of coincidental events, are targeted with ritualized interventions, and may gather force or fade away (Butchart, 1998). To 'materialize' such abstractions, Foucault (1984b) offered the strategy of examining the minutiae of practices and techniques – what people *do* and what is *done* to/with them – to interrogate how the body (and the self) has been 'totally imprinted by history' (p. 83).

Foucault (1982) claims that his genealogical objective was 'to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made into subjects' (p. 208). He does this through theoretical exposition, and examination of historical, cultural and discursive processes, rather than offering a method with which to 'identify', or foreground, 'subject positions' in/through language. In other words, his 'ideas' are tools and lenses that must be applied. Post-structuralism profoundly challenges the traditional psychological view of the person as an individual who is the core of a coherent and stable self, endowed with consciousness and an interior psyche-space, the independent and original source of meaning and action. From a post-structuralist perspective, this unique and authentic self is regarded as a fiction of western individualization, circulating via the psy complex (Rose, 1998). Thus, the subject-as-agent is de-centred: it is discourses, not the subjects who speak them, that

produce knowledge; subjects may speak and produce texts, but they are operating within the discursive formation of their historical moment. 'The subject' is produced within discourse, must be *subjected* to its conventions of power/knowledge, and becomes the 'bearer' of discourse (Hall, 2001, p. 79).

Foucault's genealogical writings offer several tactics for the capture of 'subjects' – rather than 'subject positions' per se – as follows. First, discursive strategies produce 'figures' that 'personify' particular forms of knowledge – for example, The Hysterical Woman, The Masturbating Child, The Malthusian Couple (see Chapter 2) – and these 'personages' appear as privileged objects, targets and 'anchoring points' for knowledge/power (Foucault, 1978, p. 105). Such figures have the attributes we would expect, specific to the discursive regimes of that historical moment; and their 'normative transgression' inscribes the imperative for re-inscription, vigilance, regulation and reformation. Second, these figures are located in particular functional sites, in power relations with other figures, where status is conferred through power/knowledge, authority, expertise, pedagogy or custodianship, e.g. parent-child, doctor-patient, husband-wife, lecturer-student (Foucault, 1982). Such inter-subjective 'relationships' are thus fabricated in terms of the crystallized power differentials of particular times and places; and are held in place through power-full techniques of confession and examination.

These figures might serve as specific, individualized identification-points to impel particular kinds of action. But, in Foucault's genealogical studies, the circular apparatus of disciplinary power in modern societies must go further to entangle us in its multifarious operations and effects, and effectively 'knit' us into participation as subjects (Jager, 2001). Thus, Foucault (1977) documents societal phenomena of panoptic surveillance, by individuals, by the norms of institutionalized knowledge/power; and the institutional / cultural imperative to 'confess' and 'talk about' troubling experience, particularly, but not only, sex (cf. Foucault, 1978). In Foucault's description of (historicized) subjectivity, adoption of the speaking position of confessee - directly, or vicariously through exposure to others' confessions - mark individuals as docile subjects. Significantly, his genealogical writing does *not* analyze 'texts'

that attempt to fabricate such docile responses through rhetorical persuasion, representation or address.

Foucault's approach to subjectivity is intricately connected, then, to his analytics of modern power. Given the abstraction, instability and anonymity of this power, it is useful to briefly draw in Foucault's (1982) guidelines on how to 'analyze' power here. The main idea is that power should be examined via the micro-technologies, strategies and operations through which it is exercised, and through which individuals become subjects (Paternek, 1987), rather than its crystallized, oppressive end-points in macro-structures/systems. Thus, Foucault (1982) suggests critical analytic attention to the following points: the system of *differentiations* which permit one individual to exercise power over another (e.g. knowledge, expertise, custodianship); the types of *objectives* pursued through the exercise of power (e.g. authority, privilege); the *means* of bringing power relations into being (e.g. economic disparity, surveillance, confession); the *forms of institutionalization* which power relations assume (e.g. medical, psychological, penal or pedagogical discourses); and the *degrees of rationalization* employed to 'justify' the exercise of power within a field of other possibilities (e.g. giving information to 'liberate' individuals, confession as 'catharsis') (p. 792).

Rather than a unitary subject then, Foucault (1982, 1991b) sees subjectivity as dispersed among swarming imperatives for speaking subjects in multiple discursive formations in particular relations of power – as a de-centred patchwork assemblage (cf. Deleuze, 1988). It is through such plurality, over-determination and displacement of 'technologies of the self' that the subject is enabled towards the reflexive self-fashioning that characterized Foucault's (1986, 1988) later writing. Here, the subject may 'put together' a particular, ethical configuration of the 'self' through deploying discursively available techniques and resources; and through resisting or misappropriating particular imperatives (see 'governmentality': Chapter 2). This 'later' approach was discussed in several seminars and interviews, but was not supported by methodological or empirical writing.

## 2. SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSES

### **Epistemological territories, methodological tactics**

Foucault (1971) called his archaeological approach 'a happy positivism'; content to describe the relationships between (truthful) statements to establish the historical conditions of their existence. Foucault's genealogy was explicitly 'anti-hermeneutic' through its opposition towards any coherent gestalt or interpretation of truthful 'deeper meaning' (McNay, 1992, p. 142). Instead, Foucault (1991b) claimed he was mapping 'surfaces' of minor processes and events that embed the emergence of objects and subjects.

Some commentators on genealogy have used Foucault's 'anti-signification' and 'anti-textuality' stances to assert the empiricism of his studies; that he was, in fact, describing real, material, historical practices, and providing detailed archival evidence for claims about truth, power and subjectivity (e.g. Dean, 1994b; Hook, 2001a; Kendall & Wickham, 1999). While Fairclough (1992) – as a discourse analyst – argues that Foucault's genealogy 'lacks systematic analysis of texts in which real people do, say and write things' (p. 56); Howarth (2000) engagingly argues that Foucault's 'brand' of post-structuralism preceded other deployments that embraced the semiotic/symbolic functions of language (Lacan), and interpretation of texts (Derrida), in more theoretically sophisticated ways. Other commentators on genealogy have fished out more ambiguous statements by Foucault (usually from interviews), which defeat naïve realist or empiricist positions (e.g. Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Tamboukou, 2003), to 'prove' that his writing (or his intention) was indeed 'interpretive', and therefore, (more) worthy of commentary, circulation and emulation in contemporary social sciences and humanities disciplines.

Such tensions over 'real things' hover on the edges of the so-called 'turn' in social psychology during the 1970s – away from experimentation; towards the meaning people make of experience 'in their own words' (cf. 'interviews': Potter & Hepburn, 2005); and towards alliance with disciplines with long-standing theoretical and methodological traditions of language analysis and textual interpretation (Burman & Parker, 1993a). Within

a broad social constructionist rubric – that selves, relationships, objects and events are constructed in language as if they were real, and so language itself is the object of study (Burr, 1995) – discourse analysis can be generally defined as the practice of showing how language (or discourse) works to produce particular effects in specific contexts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). But few discourse analysts agree on what they are ‘showing’, how and why. Discourse analysis refers then to a miscellany of approaches to discourse, based on diverse philosophical, theoretical and methodological affiliations; and which hold particular versions of subjectivity.

In the discipline of social psychology (not linguistics), several commentators have noted the development of two ‘styles’ of discourse analysis, demarcating different territories, maps, vehicles and destinations. Edley and Wetherell (1997), for example, have conceptualized these competing styles along these lines, which I have adapted, and present here in more analytical detail than the introduction in Chapter 1:

- *DISCOURSE-AS-INTERACTION WORK* that is based on traditions of ethno-methodology, speech act theory and conversation analysis, and focuses on close analysis of the action orientation of talk, from which rules, patterns and variations are discerned. Discourse is tied to action/function. Human agents use language as tool-users to un/wittingly *do* things in conversations (*micro*-contexts), e.g. criticize, blame or present themselves in particular ways. These tasks are achieved, and repeatedly renegotiated, in specific contexts of interaction. Discourse analysis remains faithful to a corpus of transcribed conversational material – either ‘naturally occurring talk’ or through ‘naturalistic interactions’ in interviews and discussions (Potter, 2002, 2004a); and tries to show, through unpicking lengthy extracts represented with detailed transcription conventions, that descriptive claims by the analyst are borne out in the talkers’ words (e.g. Edley, 2001; Hepburn, 1997, 2000b; Hepburn & Potter, 2003; Wooffitt, 2001).
- *DISCOURSE-PRACTICE WORK* that follows post-structuralist ideas - of Foucault (mostly) - to examine discourse/s, ideology, power and subjectivity in particular



textual sites or speaking situations, but this analysis is connected to broader social processes (*macro-contexts*). Analytical concepts like regimes, discursive practices, subject positions and narratives might be used to highlight the ways in which individuals are spoken for/by discourses, which makes particular kinds of 'selves' appear (e.g. a 'depressed' woman). This approach 'de-centres' the subject as the author or agent of meaning, and critical analysis focuses on any pieces of discourse that can be interpreted as a text (e.g. Hollway, 1984a; Parker, 1992).

### Border patrols, internecine skirmishes

This division of territories has produced bitter border skirmishes – both within and between them – as proponents defend the 'position', and intentions, tools and implications, of their work against critical commentary from others. These skirmishes have included tensions between influences of 'agency' (creative tool-use, or manoeuvrability) and 'structure' (discursive determinism) in the constitution of subjectivities. The spectacular effects of such inter-textual disputation has deepened awareness of enmeshment of theory and method in discourse analysis, producing new levels of self-reflexivity (positively) and nervousness (negatively) for discourse analysts, requiring evermore sophisticated how-to-do-it specifications from explicit perspectives, to avoid clashes and lashes (e.g. Coyle, 2000; Parker & Bolton Discourse Network, 1999; Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002; Potter, 2004a; Van Dijk, 1995, 1997; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001a; Willig, 1999a, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wood & Kroger, 2000). I briefly sketch two examples of territorialized skirmishes, one *between* the above 'styles', and one *within* the discourse-practice style.

Firstly, the epic spats between Jonathan Potter (discourse-as-interaction) and Ian Parker (discourse-practice) etched lines of difference through spectacular disciplinary debates in journals and books (e.g. Parker, 1990a, 1990b, 1998, 1999; Potter, 1996, 1998; Potter, Edwards & Ashmore, 1999; Potter, Wetherell, Gill & Edwards, 1990). These arguments have constituted the foundational divisions between 'styles' as distinct 'schools' with the imperial clarity that they both now claim (e.g. Parker, 1997a; Potter, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b). These schools are in/formally known as 'discursive psychology' or the

Loughborough-School (Potter); and 'critical social psychology', 'Continental Discourse Analysis' or the Manchester-School (Parker). While Parker appears to have moved on to psychoanalytic territories, Potter has honed a discursive approach – by dropping the previous analytical style centred around 'interpretive repertoires' (cf. Potter & Mulkay, 1985; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1988) for closer-grained 'conversation analysis' – centralizing naturally occurring, interactive discourse (e.g. Potter, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b).

The crucial point of the Parker-Potter wars remains (not who was right or wrong, but) that definitions of discourse have ontological, epistemological and methodological implications. Thus, their schism is located in the status of 'reality' (or non-discursive elements) relative to the 'discourse' they analyze – basically between critical realist (Parker) and relativist (Potter) strands of social constructionism.

Critical realism holds that external realities exist outside our mis/representational discourse or texts about them; while maintaining a sense of the complexity of contexts in which phenomena appear, and the unreliability of discourse and knowledge-systems (Parker, 1992, 1998). Parker seems to use critical realism to reconcile a Marxist analysis of ideology with postmodernist epistemological critique of subjectivity (Hepburn, 2003); and to resist empiricism (see below). Along stricter Foucauldian lines, Fairclough (2001) upholds division between real things in the social world that are 'non-discursive' (e.g. the factory that manufactures washing machines, the market economy that fixes washing machine prices), and with which discourse and texts engage (e.g. the washing machine sales-person's patter, the woman-user-friendly instruction manual, media reports about the factory strike). This exemplar of Foucault's non/discursive division is cited in an exposition of analytical praxis of Fairclough's 3<sup>rd</sup> CDA model, deployed in support of a strong shift towards critical realism (see Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

Potter's (1998) attention to constructed versions of realities emergent from corpuses of interactive discourse is harshly construed (by Parker) as 'anything goes relativism'; but he (Potter) consistently denies denying the objective reality of phenomena. Potter (2003b)

posits his strong constructionist position as one of radical doubt about absolutist knowledge-claims (about reality, facts, essences or truth), and 'a radically *emic* view of objects' – focusing instead on how objects are made to appear 'real' in talk/knowledge about them (p. 788). It is certainly so that division between washing machines (as real objects) and user manuals (as expert discourse) is somewhat easier to adjudicate than between family practices, maternal subjectivities, didactic/expert media discourse, or interactive talk, about them. The position taken in this thesis is thus closely aligned with Wetherell's (1995c) problematization of the distinction between discursive and non-discursive realms, on methodological and epistemological grounds. She cogently argues that the split denies the pivotal role of both realms in constituting social relations and subjectivity; it risks sliding into a cause-effect dualism; and it creates (for the discourse analyst) an untenable task of having to decide what is inside/outside discourse. I return to Parker's, and Wetherell's, positions below; and the implications their approaches have for 'subject positioning' (and subjectivities).

A second critique regarding the status of reality – and of historicity – comes from *within* the discourse-practice strand. This concerns the implications of the eclectic, conceptual uses to which Foucault's ideas are put (by Parker and followers); and it emits from 'purists' who claim to follow Foucault's methods more faithfully (e.g. Butchart, 1997, 1998; Hook, 2001a, 2005). I put a 'South African' spin onto this critique - due to my familiarity with local contexts of discourse-work, and with the cataclysms of discourse, history and racial oppression of apartheid and its apparent demise (see Chapter 4) – but it doubtlessly crops up elsewhere.

Due to regular networking, conferencing and teaching visits by Ian Parker and Erica Burman to South African universities since 1993, Parker's (1992) 'deconstructive analysis of discourses' has had a powerful impact on South African discourse analytical writing (e.g. Levett, Kottler, Burman & Parker, 1997; Macleod, 1999; Strebel, 1997; Wilbraham, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1999a, 1999b, 2004a). Parker and Burman have also been influential in shaping South African 'critical psychology' (e.g. Hook, 2001b, 2002; Terre Blanche, Bhavnani & Hook, 1999). Hook's (2004b) *Critical psychology* volume provided a forum for

South African critical psychological scholarship, and has Parker and Burman as consulting editors as well as contributors (the only non-South African authors). It is understandable that critical realism has political appeal in South African contexts, as it does in some feminist approaches (e.g. Kitzinger, 1996; Wilkinson, 1997), where mobilization against real oppressions, and taking a valuational stance on *misrepresentation* of reality by (patriarchal, colonial and) apartheid-State ideological apparatuses, is foregrounded.

However Butchart (1997) argues – from a genealogical perspective (see studies: Butchart 1996, 1998) – that the widespread deconstructive analyses of discourses in the South African health field, haplessly ‘find’ always already constituted (reified) discourses and their objects and subjects in narrowly demarcated textual fragments (cf. Potter, Wetherell, Gill & Edwards, 1990). This is because Parkerian ‘texts’ are severed from the historical and institutional conditions and discursive practices of their manufacture and existence (cf. ‘Deconstruction’); and Parkerian textual readings generalize and abstract aspects of macro-reality from limited texts. Parker (1990b, 1992, 1997a, 1998) categorically denies these claims, and his deconstructive position – in service of a Marxist agenda - will become clearer below. Hook (2001a) follows a similar line of resistance to Parkerian ‘textuality’ (and Potter’s action-oriented view of language); and develops an (archaeological) praxis modeled on the discursive mechanisms of exclusion in Foucault’s (1971) *Orders of discourse* lecture on truth. Hook (2005) advocates demonstration of a historical slice of discourse practices to critically establish the conditions of possibility for certain knowledges; although he is not at all clear about how this genealogy would be done without some form of textual demarcation and interpretation.

### Building bridges

Several discourse analysts who actively write *about* - rather than simply ‘use’ - methodologies have recorded their disenchantment with the recycling of divisions between social psychological territories of praxis. A few ‘bridging’ tactics to manage this split have appeared. First, authors might ‘ignore’ the divisions, wittingly or not, to produce ‘generic’ social constructionist guidelines for doing discourse analysis for student-readers (e.g. Terre

Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Such (soupy) guidelines include 'looking for' recurrent terms, themes or variable constructions of phenomena, such as 'good mothering' (cf. 'interpretive repertoires': Potter & Wetherell, 1987); and exploring connotations of meanings through 'free association' (cf. Parker, 1992).

Second, others – most notably from disciplines other than psychology – have drawn different lines in the force field of discourse analyses. For example, they might (uneasily) clump social psychological approaches together, and distinguish this/these from 'cultural theory' and 'critical linguistics' deployments (e.g. Macdonell, 1986; Mills, 1997; Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002). Somewhat ironically, Mills (1997) reads social psychological approaches as united in their 'obsession' with scientific methodology and specification of technical tools of praxis. (This was apparently not intended as a compliment.)

Third, social psychological authors and even proponents of a particular 'strand' of discursive analysis have argued – along postmodern lines of multi-perspectives – that theoretical ideas, techniques and applications are pervasively distributed rather than a polar opposition. Thus, they 'flow' (promiscuously, prodigiously) within and between the opposing territories, governed by their context of use, or the particular question that is posed to particular discourse/texts (e.g. Burman & Parker, 1993b; Levett, Kottler, Burman & Parker, 1997; Parker & Bolton Discourse Network, 1999; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001a & 2001b). Along with this smorgasbord of ideas, tools and tricks to 'choose', come warnings (in smaller print) of reducing discourse analysis to 'just another thoughtless empirical technique' (Parker, 1992, p. 22), or a value-free and/or theory-free tool (Burman, 1991b), applicable, in an uncritical way, to any/all texts (Parker, 2005; Parker & Burman, 1993). Thus, choices of approaches have increasingly come to mark alliances; with philosophical and 'political correctness' implications. Most notably, argues Potter, along the lines of *good* value-driven 'ideology critique', 'feminist research' or 'empowerment of the oppressed'; versus *bad* 'relativism' (Potter, 1998; Potter, Edwards & Ashmore, 1999). This locates – along Foucauldian lines – power in the machine; panoptic surveillance that operates through proliferating webs of ever more sophisticated criteria to judge discourse analytic work (Fairclough, 1992), and this produces interpretive vigilance.

Fourth, some discourse analysts – disenchanted with above logomachies - have constructed explicitly integrative mixtures of ‘styles’ that straddle the disciplinary divide and combine the in/sights that both strands usefully provide. Such discourse analytic mixtures combine finer-grained analysis of interactive talk, with social theory of various sorts. For example, Billig (1997, 1999a) examines the constitution of a subjective ‘unconscious’ through confluence between conversation analysis, rhetoric (‘argumentation’), institutional *and* ideological shaping of psyches. Wetherell’s (1998) synthetic model finds speaking subjects constituted through subject positions within prevailing, socially (or institutionally) anchored discourses; *and* as agents who accomplish (shifting) positional negotiations in situated conversational interactions with others (see below). Fairclough (1992) marries macro-scale concerns of (post-structuralist) social theory – discourse, subjectivity, knowledge, truth, power and ideology – with rigorous linguistic analysis of language-use in ‘texts’ (see Chapter 1).

These dialectical models deploy microanalysis of minutiae of talk/text to resist the top-down, univocal determinism of abstract social theories. Thus, Fairclough ‘unpicks texts for political purposes’ (Mills, 1997, p. 133), and these purposes are to render discursive transformation thinkable (and doable). He has harnessed a matrix of theorization to these critical ends too; inscribing CDA with a nuanced understanding of power; a sense of institutional force in the encoding and distribution of persuasive/preferred subject positions; *and* situated potentials for (a) governmental collusion and normalizing consensus, *and* (b) struggle, contestation and misappropriation. In Fairclough’s (1995a) analytical praxis for media discourse, opportunities for creative social/subjective renovation appear in the multiplicative interstices and imbrications between discourses and texts – as inter-discursivities and inter-textualities (see Chapter 1). CDA thus unpicks these ‘seams of tension’ to forge contrapuntal positionings (p. 133).

### 3. 'FOUCAULDIAN' ANALYSES OF SUBJECT POSITIONING

#### Positioning positioning

Although my intention in this thesis is to 'bridge' the schism between the styles of social psychological discourse analysis – the interactionists versus the discourse/social theorists - I do not attempt to develop a coherent, synthetic model of 'subject positioning' (such as Wetherell, or Fairclough, have done). Rather, I sought to approach a 'problematic' – the pedagogical implantation of imperatives for conversations about sex - from different directions, and different positions on subject-positions; thereby (a) generating different statuses of discourse, texts and contexts for different kinds of analysis, and (b) layering directions, positions, levels, angles and pieces together, chapter by chapter. Thus, read together – and connected by the 'Foucauldian spine' of Fairclough's (1995a, 1998) 2<sup>nd</sup> model of CDA – this approach sutures the schism partially, and leaves openings for them to fall apart again.

This is a kind of multi-perspectivalism (cf. Philips & Jorgenson, 2002), but with a critical edge. It aimed to intermesh different discourse/texts and tools to engage a *dispositif* – media discourse practice – of maternal subject positioning. Some of those statuses (of discourse-as-data) and directions (of analysis) have been left out of this thesis; but I will counterpoise several approaches to subject positioning through analysis of textual practice (Chapters 6 & 7), and interactive discussions about texts (Chapter 8). Thus, I review the 'positions' of several pivotal discourse analytic theoreticians who have appropriated aspects of Foucault's ideas on discourse/s and subject positions.

The selection of three figureheads of Foucauldian subject positioning – Hollway, Parker and Wetherell – inevitably occludes desirable others; but they were chosen to *do* several things. Their work dips into and skims across different kinds of selving, and different 'styles' of analysis (see above). What this usefully demonstrates is the complex 'theoretical pastiche' that is discursive praxis, cobbled together from various intellectual resources (e.g. psychoanalysis, positioning theory, Marxism, deconstruction, etc.); and that such inter-

textual resources, positions and tools are not finite, and may shift, in their work. Hollway's (1984a) 'Foucauldian' praxis is used as a critical foil to perform its 'difference' in relation to the other deployments;<sup>5</sup> although the conventionalizing discursive territories of her feminine/masculine positions are referred to in my analysis chapters. The three figures are critically sketched along these dimensions relevant to this thesis' purposes:

- The definition of discourse/s espoused, and meta/theoretical inscriptions on this;
- The kind of 'subject' that is conceived in relation to discourse, and what 'subject positions' are/do; and
- The nature of discourse that is considered analyzable, and broad analytical orientation, such as research questions posed (rather than specific procedures).

The positions on positioning are serially mapped, but capillary lines and inter-discursive nodes are mapped between them. In particular then, this chapter unpicks four directions from which Foucauldian analyses of subject positioning have been launched, viz.

- (1) Foucault's own understanding of '*subjection*' to/within discourses, although the operation of power is differently formulated in earlier/later models (Foucault, 1972, 1978);
- (2) Object Relations conceptualization of '*inter-subjectivity*', or relational positioning between *people* based on projected psychic mechanisms and defenses (e.g. Hollway, 1984a);
- (3) Althusserian '*interpellation*' of subjects into (oppressive) ideological apparatuses – modeled on Lacanian signification, or individuals recognizing themselves in 'images' as anchors of identification (e.g. Parker, 1992);
- (4) *Narrative positioning* in interactive discourse, where speakers constantly renegotiate positioning of themselves and others, in relation to other positions (e.g. Davies & Harre, 1990; Wetherell, 1998).

### Wendy Hollway: psychoanalytically spoken for subjects

Hollway (1984a) follows Foucault's (1972) definition of discourses (plural) as 'any regulated system of statements (about an object)' (p. 105). Hollway's analysis claims to proceed



through attention to 'statements' in terms of the rules, institutional practices and power relations that make such statements possible (cf. Foucault, 1972); but her 'utterances' were obtained through group discussions with British couples about heterosexual sexual relationships. Hollway's (1989) intention is to examine 'a theory of the relation between meaning and subjectivity' (p. 33); and this distinguishes her 'interpretive discourse analysis', she asserts, from Foucauldian archaeologies or genealogies, deconstructionist analyses of texts, and Potter and Wetherell's (1987) 'non-psychological' approach to language (p. 33). She draws selective interpretive lenses from miscellaneous psychoanalytic theories, e.g. Lacanian semiotics and 'desire', Kleinian 'splitting' and 'projection', Freudian 'repression' and 'cathexis'.

Hollway (1984a) found various 'discourses' in her participants' talk – a *Male sex drive discourse* based on a strongly biologized imperative; a *Have-hold discourse* built on the Judeo-Christian 'containment' of sexuality within conjugal alliance; and a *Permissive discourse*, seemingly inflected with feminism and sexology, that constituted pleasurable sex both as 'natural' and as 'equal rights' (for women). Hollway interpretively links the gendered inflections of such forms of talk with unconscious defense mechanisms. Thus, although men and women appear to have similar basic needs (for love, sex, security), 'positioning' as relational gendered subjects is organized around inter-psychic mechanisms of splitting, repression and projection; and 'socialized' in ways that reproduce men's sexual gaze and desire (to defend against his dependence on mother/women) and women's enmeshment in emotional attachment, mothering and domesticity (to defend against her sexual desire).

Discourses then, make available (gendered) 'positions' for speaking subjects to take up. Hollway (1984a) argues that such positions are adopted in relation to other *people* (p. 261) – that is, in the Object Relations sense of inter-subjectivity, operating through intra- and inter-psychic mechanisms of desire, splitting, projection and repression, rather than relations between 'speaking positions' in linguistic, conversational, narrative or discursive terms (which resist essentialism of psychoanalytic formulations). These two meanings of subject positioning seem conflated in her praxis, and she confusingly explains inter-subjectivity

between *people* in 'linguistic' terms, viz. the grammatical differentiation between the subject and object of sentences (p. 261) (see 'narrative positioning' below, e.g. Davies & Harre, 1990; Wetherell, 1998).<sup>6</sup>

Both subject- and object-positions have agency and power in the sense of their inter-subjective functionality; but although they are (theoretically) open to be occupied by men and women, are more likely to be gender-differentiated in entrenched discourses concerning sexuality. For example: women are positioned, by themselves and by other speakers, as 'objects' of MSDD (with men as 'subjects'), and 'subjects' of HHD (with men as their 'objects'). Aligned with psychoanalytic and discourse theory, positioning (and subjectivity) is not conceived here as unitary; nor as a rational or conscious 'choice'. Hollway (1984a) develops the notion of 'investment' – modeled (critically) on Freudian 'cathexis' – to explain why men and women continue to relate to one another through these naturalized positions. This 'investment' refers – in a more Foucauldian way than Freudian – to disciplinary powers, satisfactions and enablements that accrue to docile subjects in the social/historical scaffolding of appropriate subjective action; rather than determinism by choice, drive, external cause or 'reward' as a simple effect (p. 238).

Hollway (1989) offers broad guidelines for a discourse analytic framework. She advises theoretical selection of participants on grounds of the richness of 'talk' they are able to produce, rather than representivity; and foregrounds the intuitiveness of the analytic process, e.g. choice of excerpts for analysis from a corpus of transcriptions. Hollway contrasts two interrelated approaches to analytic work: a 'process approach', in which an extract is analyzed because it 'says something', viz. so-called induction of meaning from texts; and a more 'functional' approach, which puts an extract to work to serve particular purposes, viz. theory-driven meaning-production (p. 38). Hollway unquestioningly uses 'talk' as her analyzable discourse; but the analysis of talk she advocates is divergent from the discourse-as-interactionists (above) in at least two ways. First, it emphasizes content ('meaning') above grammatical structure, rhetorical processes or interactive aspects of language (Hollway, 1989, p. 38). Second, it uses a psychoanalytic interpretative lens to

escape description; and thus, the boundaries around the discourse/text under analysis become less clear.

Such interpretation is aligned with the post-structuralist axiom of making meaning through difference and deference to other discourses and texts (cf. inter-discursivity, inter-textuality: e.g. Fairclough, 1992; Parker, 1992). Hollway (1989) claims that this process inscribes reflexivity on the role of theory, and the analyst's own subjective positioning, on meanings produced (p. 39-46). But, this is not reflexive enough for some. Although Hollway claims primary allegiance to Foucault's discourse theory, Widdicombe (1992) points to Hollway's inadequacy in recognizing her own psychoanalytic interpretation as a discursive practice that actively *constitutes* intra- and inter-psychic phenomena, rather than simply uncovering its hidden presence/essence, and reflecting it (cf. Wetherell, 1995c). Thus, Hollway 'traces utterances back to putative inner structures of unconscious minds' (Hepburn, 2003, p. 76); and 'fills in the spaces' left by Foucault's denial of the sovereignty of the individual with the 'possessive individualism' and 'essentialist humanism' of psychoanalysis (Shotter, 1990).

Hollway un/wittingly upholds such naïve praxis in her latest exposition of a 'free association, narrative interview' method (or FANI) to analyze interviewees' discourse (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). FANI is concerned with how thematic and dynamic dimensions of the research interview context itself shape unconscious inter-subjective relationships (e.g. transference, recognition, containment, etc.), and so shape what is un/said and how.<sup>7</sup> Using such transcribed interview-accounts as texts, FANI specifies broad use of 'free association' and 'psychotherapeutic tools' to destabilize coherence of interviewees' accounts and bring 'defended meanings' to light. This is similar to Hollway's (1984a) earlier formulation; that splitting and repression protects investments in conventional positions, particularly where these are contested. But its interpretative premises, and simplistic model of language, have raised further hackles.

From an interactionist perspective, Hepburn (2003) challenges the one-sided 'textual uses' to which interactive interview-talk are put; thus, extracts presented in 'analysis' eclipse the questions that were asked by interviewers to set the talk up in particular (psychoanalytic)

ways, and do not allow the interviewee to talk back, to dispute or interrupt interpretations of their 'defended-ness' (p. 78). From discursive-psychoanalytical perspectives, several theorists have extended arguments along more sophisticated trajectories (e.g. Billig, 1999a; Parker, 1997b; Stoler, 1995; Walkerdine, 1997; Wetherell, 1995c). Such writing challenges the use of interview-talk as an unmediated form of access to inner psychoanalytical paraphernalia, or outer social realities. Instead, psychoanalytic discourses are understood to *deeply* structure colonial, cultural, familial, sexual, conversational and interpretive practices, and the subjectivities of those who use and are used by them. Thus, psychoanalysis – with its un/conscious objects/subjects - is unpacked as a discursive apparatus productive of a particular kind of fractured inter/subjectivity (Rose, 1990). It is in *this* sense that psychoanalytical discourse intermittently appears in this thesis on talking about children about sex.

#### **Ian Parker: sparring spectres of Marx, Derrida and Lacan**

Parker's approach to analysis of discourses is frequently emulated as 'Foucauldian' (e.g. Willig, 2001). His self-positioning conceives his work inscribed by the spirit of Foucault's ideas rather than slavish following of Foucault's 'methods' (Parker, 1992, 1994, 1997a). But Parker's eclectic and partial borrowing from different intellectual resources, styles and tools – many of these contradictory - render his approach difficult to assemble or apply as a coherently Foucauldian exercise.

Parker's (1992) Foucauldian inscription is evident in most of the definitional criteria he offers for 'discovering' discourse/s (p. 3-22). Thus, discourses appear as coherent, regulated systems of statements about objects, phenomena or reality. Discourses are specific to particular historical conditions of existence; they are institutionally generated/supported – which implicates as discursive practices, the techniques and procedures by which institutionalized knowledge is enacted on/by bodies and minds; and their articulation refers (competitively, territorially, defensively, deferentially, reflexively) to their own domains of truth relative to other truths. Discourses 'contain' subjects; that is, they 'make available a

space for particular types of self to step in' (p. 9), which inscribes particular kinds of responsibilities, action and power.

Rubbing against Foucault – as counter-inscription – arrives with Parker's definitional criteria that separate truth/reality, discourse, power and ideology. Parker (1992) does not see power and resistance coming from 'everywhere' through discourses (knowledges) to 'produce' subjects, as Foucault (1978) would have it; but is instead concerned with power that constrains, oppresses and dupes subjects through its reproduction of unequal power relations in service of authoritarian ideological interests. This Marxist (or Althusserian) line alters Foucault-inscribed subjectivity (see below); and it inflects the aims of Parker's analysis as 'political', 'radical', 'critical', 'value-driven' - to expose the institutionalized operations through which discourses produce oppressive factions of reality, and to unseat their effects on docile subjects in entrenched power relationships.

Furthermore, discourses are said to be at work in/through 'texts', demarcated fragments of discourse, which Parker (1992) defines as 'delimited tissues of meaning, reproduced in *any* form that can be interpreted' (p. 6). Apart from the snippets of textual analysis in his theoretical/methodological writings, his relatively few published analyses have in/famously included an extract from the televised soap opera *Coronation Street* (Parker 1988), the instructions on a toothpaste tube (Parker 1994), and a joke about Margaret Thatcher (Parker, 2005)<sup>8</sup> – notably short, singular, public domain texts, produced for other audiences, analyzed in written forms; and *not* 'interactive talk' that has been generated by researchers for discourse analysis, nor 'naturally occurring talk', said to occur without the researcher's intervention (Potter, 2004a).

Parker's (1992) critical realist position requires suspicion about discourse, texts, power and ideology; and it presumes the existence of a non-discursive realm beyond these phenomena. It is this reality or realm that is the determinant of discourse and texts (from the 'outside' in); thus, economic conditions make ideology/discourse/texts necessary; and ideology/discourse/texts make economic conditions possible and sustainable (cf. Hepburn, 2003). Texts distil and transform contextual 'traces' of this reality through practices of

*mis*/representation; through analysis, the traces are reified, and read as-if-they-were-real, or are 'given reality' as a way of gaining access to them (p. 30-31). Assuming a moral-political stance, 'complicitous critique' must then recuperate or reproduce the (despised) objects or terms it seeks to undo (Hutcheon, 1988). Hepburn (2003) attributes Parker's concern with the discrepant realities inside and outside of texts to the influence on his thinking by postmodern-Marxist theoretician, Jameson (1991); notably a critique of the 'economic logics' that organize the global markets and institutions of late capitalism, which have entrenched commodity reification (branding) and consumption as imperative surfaces of the postmodern subject (see *loveLife* branded 'lifestyles': Chapter 4).

Within this broader critical commitment, I have found it useful to read particular analytical tactics advocated by Parker – the work of texts, the hailing of subjects – in terms of his instrumental intellectual debts to Derrida's (1976) Deconstruction<sup>9</sup> and Althusser's (1971) notion of interpellation. Parker's (1992) partial and strategic deployment of deconstructive techniques – rather than Deconstruction per se (Hepburn, 1999) – allows him to examine the binary opposition between realities inside and outside of texts, within a broader Marxist and critical realist frame. This appears to stand uneasily with Derrida's dictum of 'nothing beyond the text' – generally taken to mean there can be no 'meaning' of the non-discursive realm outside of the discourse and texts about it (see Burr, 1995; Culler, 1983; Dews, 1987). But Parker's (1992) deconstructive take would be to expose textual *mis*representation or *mis*identification of modern subjectivities that perpetuate socio-structural and economic inequities of power in (reified) contexts, histories, realities, families, relationships beyond discourse.<sup>10</sup> His critical analysis is thus intended to intervene and interrupt texts (and interpellation) through examining opposing meanings, positions and practices. I return to this issue in Chapter 6, where my (explicitly *Foucauldian*) concern is with how truth effects are constituted through rules of scientific formation, circulation and persuasion; rather than 'proving' their falsity and replacing them with a correct (liberating) truth.

Critique of Parker's (1989) penchant for deconstructive tactics has come from many directions. From a (cognitive) discourse-as-interaction perspective, Van Dijk (1995) dubs deconstructionist analyses 'literary'; and therefore, 'unhelpful' in terms of providing critical,

empirical analysis of the ways in which power and ideology subjugate and oppress at the level of ordinary, everyday conversations. From a feminist perspective, Burman (1990) identifies the danger of de-politicization in deconstructionist valorization of *difference* – that is, difference as a ‘metaphysical dynamic’ in the inevitable construction of opposition, rather than ‘a starting point for resistance and collective action’ against plain wrongness (p. 214). Arnott (1991) argues that deconstruction fails to gain access to political or public-sphere debates as a result of ‘favour(ing) theorization over activism’ (p. 118). While it may be so that deconstructionist analyses are abstruse with jargon, Hepburn (1999) argues that it is precisely the ‘loose’, ‘instrumental’, ‘partial’ and ‘defensive’ *misappropriations* of Derrida’s deconstruction in critical social psychology – as a technique within the more important political work of ideology- and society-critique - that has undermined its emancipatory potential.

Parker (1992) also adopts Derrida’s (and Foucault’s) post-structuralist preference for public domain texts for analysis; that is *writing* rather than *utterances or talk* (cf. Billig, 1993).<sup>11</sup> Parker and Bolton Discourse Network’s (1999) extension of ‘texts’ to include anything and everything from writing, to kinds of talk, to various cultural artifacts – as forms of ‘practice’ - is rather muddled with miscellaneous ‘critical’ and ‘cultural’ modes of textual/semiotic analysis. This is not a book that extends or sustains political thinking about deconstructive praxes that privilege *writing* (or language); nor does it aim to.<sup>12</sup> But the selection of few/single public domain texts for analysis obviously relates (also) to practical matters of convenience.<sup>13</sup> It avoids management of sprawling corpuses of archival documents, messy interview narratives or interactions; and it obviates transcription (cf. Potter, 2004a). The confined space of academic articles, chapters and theses do not allow for unraveling copious amounts of discourse in meticulous detail, or expansive commentaries on contexts (Fairclough, 1995a; Hollway, 1989; Parker & Burman, 1993; Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Parker (1992) suggests that selection of texts for analysis is subjective; based on a particular discursive configuration that the analyst recognizes and wishes to expose, for whatever reason.

Deconstruction is, of course, applied to *written* texts; and the dicta of 'death of the author' and 'birth of the reader' apply (Dews, 1987). Parker's (1992) analytical praxis appropriates these dicta, albeit rather telegraphically. In Barthes' (1977) seminal formulation of 'death of the author', the emphasis of reading shifts from an all-knowing, unified, intending author as originator and guarantor of meaning, towards (non-subjective) language itself – both in terms of how it constitutes 'authority' (as origin, as encoding) and how it scaffolds 'spaces' for reading subjects, from which meaning is fabricated (as destination, as decoding). Whatever the intent/context of the public domain texts Parker (1992) selects for analysis, his analysis approaches them as 'addressors' of an audience of readers (p. 9). Texts are thus examined in terms of how they represent, address, position and produce subjects.<sup>14</sup> To recruit subjects into everyday ideological discursive participation, Parker (1992) explicitly deploys Althusser's notion of interpellation.

Neo-Marxist Althusser (1971) highlighted the operations, in modern capitalist societies, of social institutions as 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (e.g. psychology, education, mass media, the family); these functioned alongside 'Repressive State Apparatuses' (e.g. army, police). He did not configure ideology as an abstract realm of distorted ideas, but as embodied and lived in the material, everyday practices and social relations into which we are recruited.<sup>15</sup> Althusser resorted to (Lacanian) psychoanalytic formulations of recognition and identification to explain the process of recruitment or interpellation of subjects. He used the (univocal) metaphor of a *policeman* hailing in a street – 'hey, you there!' – and recognition in a pedestrian, who in turning around, acknowledged that the hail had addressed them (p. 163).

Thus, ideology in service of ruling class interests – through discourse circulating via institutions, and through psychoanalytical techniques of symbolic representation and recognition – addresses a particular kind of person, and the individual is made to listen and respond as that kind of person; and is thereby recruited, or made into 'an ideological subject' inscribed in/by that position (Parker, 1992). Parker's eclecticism produces here a tense standoff between Neo-Marxist, Lacanian and Foucauldian positions on 'ideology', which remains largely implicit in his work, defying integration. His use of 'interpellation' seems to



support a critical realist suspicion of ideological manipulation of reality/subjects. The effect of prevailing ideology is to mask ideological subjection through the production of an experience of agency; scaffolding the belief that we have freely chosen this mode of being/becoming.

Parker (1992) argues that, in order to interpellate (and so persuade and govern) subjects, discourses offer positions from which they make sense to readers; they represent and address/hail *a particular kind of person* that we identify with, e.g. an adolescent who is moody, an embarrassed parent, a relapsed smoker, etc. According to Lacan (1977), processes implicated in the 'imaginary' and 'symbolic' orders constitute a sense of self first through recognition and identification with external images ('mirror phase'), and then by locating this image/self within existing social (symbolic) structures in which we are embedded (cf. Bowie, 1979). Lacan (1991) – and Žižek (1989) – later conceived this identification process as attending to 'nodal points', as 'master signifiers' of meaning, that are 'stitched' or 'quilted' together to construct coherent (conventionalized) individual, group and national identities (ETC, 2005). Parker (1997b) explains that Lacan's 'structuralism' allows him (Parker) to marry psychoanalysis with Marxist suspicion about non-discursive reality that is unattainably hidden from us (cf. Lacan's 'the Real').

But, if we connect subject positions within discourses to (a) a Lacanian notion of the imaginary/symbolic and nodal points, and (b) Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses, then we cannot avoid the hailing power of (or being duped by) subject positions. On the mooted inescapability from hailed positioning, Parker (1992) argues that subject positions are the prevailing representations of personhood, and 'the choice is only to accept or resist their terms' (p. 10). The terms implicate positioning in relation to discursive limits, and being subjected to particular power relations inherent in the relations between different positions, e.g. mother-child.

A problem grappled with in this thesis – on didactic media discourse about HIV/Aids risk – is that Parker's reductive approach to *all* 'texts' as *ideological* 'addressors' misses the different dynamics of rhetorical persuasion, psychical manipulation and representational

address that are at work in different kinds of texts and contexts. As I suggested in Chapter 1, there are differences between so-called 'open' and 'closed' texts (e.g. Eminem lyrics versus HIV-awareness brochures); and also how subjects are expected to respond to them. Didactic texts may be more polyvocal, beneficent and creative in constituting risk-avoidant subjectivities than Althusser's authoritarian interpellation, and Parker's stoic use of Althusser, suggests (Mills, 1997). Is all positioning of subjects – in the Althusserian mode – considered 'ideological'? How is such a position reconciled with Foucault's antipathy towards the (Marxist) concept of ideology? What is lacking in Parker's formulation is a way to connect these dots; some kind of Marxist/Lacanian praxis of the ideological and semiotic operation of texts to examine *mis*-identification and subjective *mis*-reactions that he clearly mistrusts.<sup>16</sup> My own analyses in Chapters 6 and 7 deploy Fairclough's (1995a) tactics for unpacking rhetorical persuasion *and* ideological functions of media discourse; *and* its constant (Foucauldian) slippage and reiteration (see Chapter 8).

Because Parker's writing on analysis of discourses is largely 'theoretical' or 'abstract' – illustrated with incisive snippets of sundry textual or cultural analyses rather than empirical engagement with a larger corpus of discourse material – the implications of his edgy, intellectual eclecticism are seldom worked through in a sustained argument.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Parker (1992, 1997a) seems at times to sideline Marx/Althusser and claim primary allegiance to Foucault's (1978) capillary-circulation of disciplinary power. Here subject positions define the responsibilities and powers of individuals; they prescribe the possibilities and limits for choices and actions; and they accord individual rights – the rights to speak as a category of person, to claim authority or demand risk-safety. Thus, subject positions are seen to fabricate the distributed contents, form and agency/force of modern subjectivity (cf. Rose, 1990, 1998).

But Parker's 'other' writings on psychoanalysis and psychopathology veer back towards a harder (Marxist) line on power and ideological manipulation of realities (e.g. men's *Iron John* subjectivities: Parker, 1995); where psychoanalytic discourse holds western society in its sway of bourgeois individualism, alienation and consumerism (Parker 1997b), and

mental patients become unfortunate victims of the (capitalist-serving) normalizing clinical gaze of experts (e.g. Parker, Georgaca, Harper, McLaughlin, & Stowell-Smith, 1995).

The thread that appears to connect the Foucauldian, Marxist and psychoanalytic strands of Parker's writing is the notion of the self, circulated through the apparatus of the psychocomplex via disciplinary power, as a constituted fiction or fantasy (Hepburn, 2003). Foucault (1978) would undoubtedly agree with this - *no escape* from tentacles of ideology (Althusser) or power (Foucault), manifest in *psychic/symbolic* (Lacan) and *material practices* of daily living (Althusser and Foucault). But Foucault would offer several qualifications with respect to ideological duping of subjects. Several commentators have articulated Foucault's (1982) antipathy to Marxism along the following lines (cf. Fairclough, 1992; Howarth, 2000; McNay, 1994; Mills, 1997; Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002). (a) Foucault rejects the totalizing regime of State- or economic domination by modern subjects, and places these forces in a field of others. (b) Foucault displaces the Marxist view of ideology with overlaid systems of power/knowledge that constitute truths, subjects and social relations in a realm of material, lived practice (e.g. psychoanalytic therapy, custody courts, schools-based sex education, safer-sex technologies, etc.). There is no possibility of getting 'behind' discourse/ideology to a truer truth. (c) Foucault's disciplinary power allows no escape from normalization; but it opens a space for subversive and creative tactics, and casts subjectivity as 'unfinished' – therefore, requiring more recruitment, positioning, vigilance and regulation.

### **Margaret Wetherell: synthesizing the best of both worlds**

Wetherell tackles the polarization of different 'styles' of social psychological discourse analytic praxis (see above). She begins as, and still is, a discourse-as-interaction practitioner (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1988); but her later work, draws in Foucault's ideas about discourse and power (e.g. Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and forges a synthetic approach to 'subject positioning' that incorporates discursive structures and agency (e.g. Wetherell, 1998). Although there is (ontological) consensus on a broad definition of discourse – speaking and writing as forms of social practice - Parker (1992) has

wryly noted that the trouble between discourse analysts arrives when they start worrying about 'what goes on inside people's heads' when they use, or are used by, discourse (p. 83). This entails the *intentions* of speakers/writers: the original motivations, emotions, desires and resistances that influence how and why they speak/write in a particular way; and why they 'choose' to take up subject positions. Splits appear between post-structuralists who view texts, positions and subjects, as produced by prevailing discourses and discursive practices; and discourse-as-interactionists who see human agents as capable of manipulating prevailing positions to negotiate selves (Burr, 1995).

Wetherell's (1998) epistemological and methodological objections towards post-structuralism, and towards Parker's work in particular, have remained clear and consistent. First, she rejects the reification of discourses, as if they were 'monolithic things' (out there, and in texts) that act on passive-puppet subjects in unilaterally deterministic ways (cf. Potter, Wetherell, Gill & Edwards, 1990). Second, she argues that neglect of analysis of situated language use, everyday argument, people using talk to *do* things in ordinary conversations, has compounded this top-down discursive determinism (cf. Fairclough, 1992). Conversations, as *micro*-contexts of interaction, appear then as sites where culturally available discursive resources/positions are appropriated, negotiated, resisted and recomposed in unpredictable ways. This involved for discourse-as-interactionists, the development of (a) a more action-oriented model of language, to make room for subjects' manoeuvrability, and (b) techniques for the empirical grappling with corpuses of interactive discourse. I will mention each of these (briefly) in turn.

The 'discursive psychology' grouping that has sprung up around the discourse-as-interaction style of discourse analysis (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992) has attributed the meta/theoretical influences on their stance of *human-agents as tool-users* of language, to linguistic philosophers, Wittgenstein (1958) and Austin (1962). In Potter's (2001) lively account of this inscription: (1) Wittgenstein rejected the abstract referent view of language as simply mirroring reality (outside) or 'essences' (mental events, inside); and upheld a 'practical toolkit' view, i.e. language was conceived as part of a public performance of fragmented, heterogeneous tasks.<sup>18</sup> (2) Austin's approach to language conceived of *speech acts* or

utterances that, endowed with varying degrees of illocutionary force, meant and *did* particular things in situated interactions. In both instances then, language is action-oriented (and possibly intentional), and meanings are indexical to their contexts of use (Potter, 2001).

Potter and Wetherell's (1987) earliest model of discourse analysis worked with these ideas of language, in terms of 'constructions', (contextual) 'variations' and 'functionality' of accounts.<sup>19</sup> I do not recycle this model or 10-step methodological exposition here. As Wetherell (2001a) herself argues, these might have been revolutionary lessons to those steeped in positivist or even mainstream qualitative technologies, but according to contemporary discursive standards, are largely outmoded through being insufficiently theoretically and technically situated. Indeed, Wetherell's preference for 'working through' the critical implications of theory through empirical examination of forms of discursive interaction is evident in the next phases of her work on racist discourse and masculinities.

Wetherell and Potter's (1992) study of racist discourse in New Zealand continued the disciplinary challenge to traditional psychological explanations of racism as due to 'flawed' thinking (inside people's heads), and to sociological analyses of mass duping by ideological 'false consciousness'. The influence of Foucault's ideas became evident in Wetherell and Potter's demarcation of discourse here, though not always in straightforward ways. They were concerned with rhetorical constructions of versions of the world, and how – through fragmented discursive powers - these construe truth/reality as trustworthy, and construe subjectivities for speakers (through subject positions) as authentic and consistent. They are *not* concerned with establishing the falsity (or *misrepresentation*, or *misguidedness*) of such versions. These versions of the world/self were not entirely free-floating, but contingent on particular contexts, and were ideologically shaped. Language (and ideology) were not simply 'sticky custard or jam' smeared on the objects and subjects it constructed - surfaces cannot simply be wiped clean to reveal truth underneath (p. 91).

Wetherell and Potter (1992) were concerned with available discursive resources (as 'interpretive repertoires') and how these were appropriated and flexibly deployed in interactions. This analytical praxis was sharply distinguished from the fixity of Foucault's

(or Parker's) institution-driven 'discourses' inside and outside of texts. Analysis of the constructive features of discourse involved the identification of 'interpretive repertoires' emergent in/from context-specific discourse-use. These repertoires were 'building blocks' for manufacturing accounts of the world, the self and possible action; and were figured as 'a limited number of terms that are used in a particular stylistic or grammatical way' (Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 172), or as 'broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images' (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 90). The use of interpretive repertoires constituted forms of discursive action/practice, and was examined insofar as it allowed culturally appropriate accomplishment of identities of selves and groups, and the relationships between these constructs.

Analytically, Parker (1990a) originally objected to 'interpretive repertoires' on grounds of grammatical formalism, closure of textual meaning and voluntaristic tool-use by individuals (p. 192). Wetherell and Potter's (1992) later deployment both defused *and* exacerbated the focus on individual intentionality through implication of the instability of context-specific, fragmented resources available. Here, subjects (possibly strategically) adopted a weave of different versions and positions in one conversation. I return to 'subject positions' and 'ideological dilemmas' below.

The discourse selected for analysis by Wetherell and Potter (1992) consisted mostly of open-ended conversational interviews, and some newspaper articles and parliamentary reports. Mills (1997) has rather sharply constituted the form of discourse analysis undertaken by Wetherell and Potter as 'outmoded', along the following lines (p. 145-6). First, 'themes' are picked out (cf. interpretive repertoires), illustrated by isolated excerpts of transcribed talk, and through a kind of 'thematic content analysis', are made to relate back to previous blocs of theoretical writing on racism. Second, the short, non-interactive and de-contextualized excerpts from a vast corpus of interview-material find utterances 'transparent' in meaning/intent; and elide the analysts' interpretive position - on heterogeneity, contradiction, negotiation or resistance, for example - with the speakers' intentions.

Ironically then, the speakers were not afforded the opportunity to interactively 'talk back' to their (racialized) positioning within available (anti-racism) discourse resources.

In many ways, a later layer of Wetherell's discursive writing – on negotiation of 'masculine selves' in/through talk (e.g. Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Wetherell & Maybin, 1996) – has looped back to work through such criticisms. This is largely achieved through developing praxis of subject positioning in relation to examination of longer, dialogical extracts of discussions and conversations, where the effects of interactive positioning, and manoeuvrability, become visible.

Wetherell's (1998) position-paper on subject positioning was written against conversation analyst Schegloff's (1997) critique of (unspecified) 'CDA'; that it lacked the 'technical discipline', empirical grounding in talk and objective/descriptive decisiveness of conversation analysis.<sup>20</sup> Wetherell's (1998) 'synthetic' approach takes issue with the conceptual and analytical division between rival 'styles' of discourse analytical work, viz. (a) fine-grained analyses of what people do with their talk in particular conversational contexts; *versus* (b) macro-social analyses of the discourse/s that people draw on when they speak or write. To read a demarcated piece of social interaction about masculine subjectivities, Wetherell (1998) forges a 'hybrid' or 'twin focus' praxis to account for how speakers construct, negotiate and refuse meanings (and subject positions) in a situated context of use [see (a) above]; and why speakers draw on certain discursive resources and not others – that is, attention to the wider social and institutional formations (e.g. discourses, practices, power relations) that constitute 'choices' and 'agency' [see (b) above].

Drawing on and extending Davies and Harre's (1990), and Harre and Van Langenhove's (1991) work on narrative positioning (see below), Wetherell's (1998) focus on 'talk-in-interaction' marries the importance of 'accountability' in driving the invocation, comprehension, taking up and resistance of subject positions in conversations, with the argumentative social, institutional and discursive conditions (as 'rules of formation') that make such conversations, accounts and subject positioning possible (p. 394). This binocular view resists the Foucauldian constitution of subjects within pre-existing discourses as

partial. Wetherell (1998) admits Foucauldian subjection may be true of certain instances of positioning where speakers are positioned - in discourses about race, culture, gender, sexuality, mothering, for example - 'beyond their control and intention' (p. 401). However, she posits an indexical and malleable nature of subject positioning which tracks the shifting relations of power as speakers struggle over how things will be understood; whose version will be persuasive, authoritative and hegemonic; and what degree of defiance and manoeuvrability is possible (Wetherell, 2001b).

Inter-subjectivity becomes here 'the turns of talk in the interactional moment, the situated flow of discourse where identities are negotiated against a background of discursive practices' (Wetherell, 1998, p. 401). This double-negotiation of subject positions - at conversational and discursive levels - sets up Wetherell's notion of the 'self' or subjectivity, as 'relationally distributed'; that is, constantly changing across a fluid interactional history - and following Jerome Bruner's striking metaphor - 'not localized as is the snooker ball, but continuously spreading, changing, grouping and regrouping across a relational and social field' - as in the whole snooker table and snooker game (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996, p. 222). To this purpose, Wetherell has further developed Billig's (1991) notion of 'ideological dilemmas' as the discursive places in interactive talk where subject positions collude, collide and clash, and have to be renegotiated (Wetherell, 2001a, 2001b; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

Billig's (1991) view is of the dilemmatic or dialogical structure of argumentation - logos countered by anti-logos - and resistance is inevitable between conventionalized positions in macro-discourses, and the wilder and ironic micro-manoeuvres of misappropriation and malleability in conversations. Such 'ideological dilemmas' might be marked in conversations by, for example, silence or everyone talking simultaneously following a speaker's utterance, sidetracking unwelcome topics, joking or ridicule, laughter, the introduction of 'other' authoritative knowledge to shut down debate, rapid turns-of-talk, or interrupting with counter-views (cf. Hepburn, 2003). I explore this in Chapter 8 with respect to parents talking about race/culture.



### An interlude: narrative positioning (theory)

Wetherell's (1998) model of subject positioning – and the incisive analyses of masculine subjectivities that this has spawned (e.g. Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Wetherell & Edley, 1999) – is inscribed by Davies and Harre's (1990) influential, Foucault-inspired formulation of the 'production of selves' in conversations, underwritten by the socially shared resources, rules and structures of grammar, metaphors and narratives of personhood, e.g. agency, choice, free-will, individuality, etc. (cf. Davies & Harre, 1999). Harre and Van Langenhove's (1999c) imperial, molar *Positioning theory* has collected several pivotal writings on positioning within fine-grained dynamic social interactions between people and groups. In their technical sense:

(A) position is a complex cluster of generic personal attributes, structured in various [social] ways, which impinges on the possibilities of interpersonal, inter-group and even intra-personal action through some of such rights, duties and obligations as are sustained by the cluster (p. 1).

According to Davies and Harre (1990), positioning is 'the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines' (p. 48). Thus, a subject position incorporates 'a conceptual repertoire' that – in relation to *other* repertoires and discursive practices – inscribes (a) the particular rights and responsibilities for those who adopt and use this repertoire; and (b) a particular 'vantage point' on the world, in terms of appropriate selves, categories, metaphors, and forms of action (p. 46). In conversations, positioning is said to occur *interactively* (what one person says positions another), or *reflexively* (how one positions oneself). This draws on culturally or institutionally specific devices of 'storied' self-accounting, produced for the audiences of others (cf. Bruner, 1987; Sarbin, 1986; Shotter, 1984, 1987; Squire, 1990, 2005; Van Langenhove & Harre, 1993).

Harre and Langenhove (1991) emphasize the relational nature of positioning in conversations – that is, positioning oneself always already implies positioning of the other, and vice versa – and qualify the two basic types of positioning (interactive, and reflexive) with various strategies, modes or dynamics of discursive practice. These strategies

distinguish between positioning that is *1<sup>st</sup> order* (where positioning happens in conversational spaces, through utterances, as a matter of course), *2<sup>nd</sup> order* (where *1<sup>st</sup> order* positioning is not accepted, and reflexively renegotiated) or *3<sup>rd</sup> order* (where positioning occurs reflexively, outside the original conversation); and between positioning that is '*tacit*' (unintentional, or not conscious) or '*intentional*' (with witting awareness of the meanings and implications of utterances). This typology finds *some* *1<sup>st</sup> order* (interactive) positioning, and *all* *2<sup>nd</sup>* and *3<sup>rd</sup>* order (reflexive) positioning, '*intentional*'. In situational practice, such tactics are found to be fleeting, multifarious and overlaid.

I will give a brief example of talk about (very pragmatic) 'sexual jealousy' to ground these abstract notions of varieties of positioning (cf. Stenner, 1993; Van Langenhove & Harre, 1993). (1) Speakers are able to position themselves and others in *deliberate* ways (e.g. to present oneself as 'faithful' to a jealous partner, or to accuse a partner of sexual misdeeds, positioning them as 'unfaithful' against one's own jealous positioning). (2) Speakers may *unintentionally* position themselves or others in conversations (e.g. a listener is offended by a speaker's utterance that implies that they are 'dishonest' or 'uncommitted'). (3) Speakers are able to creatively *contest, disagree with or resist positions*, to re-position themselves, and to negotiate the outcomes of conversations in unpredictable ways (e.g. to make declarative statements, to challenge evidence/ideology as the grounds of the accusation, to make counter-accusations).

The crucial idea here is of individuals as *products* (or subjects) of available resources (limited discourses, repertoires, stories) in multiple interactions; and as *producers* (agents, tool-users) of talk in particular contexts, in (unlimited) flexible, creative, argumentative and malleable ways. Thus, positioning is suggested as a dynamic antidote for the more static notion of an assigned role in a social script (Davies & Harre, 1990); most notably, positions are multiple and shifting. Davies and Harre (1990) cautiously allude to 'at least a possibility of notional choice' of discursive practices from the array available (p. 46). Harre and Van Langenhove (1999c) claim what people say/do, privately and publicly, is *both* '*intentional*' (directed to something beyond itself), *and* '*normatively constrained*' (subject to judgements

about falsity or impropriety)(p. 2). This conceptualization appears to move uneasily in/out of Foucauldian and social cognitive discursive frames.

Thus, Harre and Van Langenhove (1999c) repeatedly draw attention to the capacity for '*strategy*' or *intention* in their tool-using talker, and examples cited as so-called origins of positioning theory illustrate this tactical thinking. For example, from the field of advertising and marketing, positioning refers to deliberate communication that 'places' a product favourably among its competitors; or in a military manoeuvre, a position is strategically taken up against another, to challenge or defend. However, as Wetherell (2001a) explains, this does not set up an '*always* strategic speaker': a competent member of a discursive community is skilled in a range of methods for achieving different tasks through talk, and is most often 'just doing what comes naturally in certain contexts' (p. 22). In this Foucauldian way, intention and agency are fabricated (or folded) from the outside in, and do not spring from an authentic homunculus within.

This more dynamic approach to subject positioning does not mean a free-for-all for selves or anything goes. Positioning must be able to account for the stickiness of the *structural positions* (in prevailing 'stories') assigned to us - being a woman, a mother, a doctor - that will scaffold the development of an appropriate set of rules, rights and moral values that regulate interactive conduct (cf. Harre & Van Langenhove, 1999c). And also account for the play of *locally-produced positions* that we use to display or defend ourselves in particular contexts, e.g. being offended, caring or 'politically correct'.

As Hall (1996) argues, to maintain a consistent or coherent 'sense of self', one would have to 'stop talking'; and that 'closure' is fictional (p. 6-7). Thus, 'coherent selves' – as the sedimentation of an accumulated record of positions – depend here on speakers' use of prevailing discursive resources in ways that are recognizable to themselves and others (Davies & Harre, 1990). This involves developing mastery of positioning techniques, and the powers to use them; and also learning about how, within the contingencies of different contexts, subjects are required to (establish and) display a coherent and unitary self (Wetherell, 2001a). In the interests of such continuity, Wetherell and Potter (1992) refer to

'dilemmas of stake' (p. 78), as situational pressures on self-presentation that work towards establishing accounts (and representations) as truthfully as possible. In other words, it is embarrassing to be 'caught out' with contradictory positions, or exposed as a poseur or as inept; for example, in this instance, talking about parenting and sex.

#### 4. *LOVELINES*: COMMUNICATIVE EVENT AS ANCHOR-TEXTS

##### Method as topic, government as topic

Discourse analytic approaches to subject positioning – around a Foucauldian centre – have been outlined in the sections above. I turn now to analytical engagement with the particular sets of discourse-as-data that constitute an examination of subject positioning of women/mothers as responsible for 'open communication' about sex, with children as well as partners. This thesis holds steady the focus on the *Lovelines* didactic textual series; and designs a series of analytical forays around this central gaze, viz. differently slanted readings of the *Lovelines* texts themselves (Chapters 6 & 7); and discussions with parents/teachers, who were given *Lovelines* texts to read and talk about with respect to their own parenting practices (Chapter 8). In this concluding section of Chapter 5, I will provide a rationale for the selection of *Lovelines* as 'communicative event'; and set up procedural signposts directing subject positioning into various levels, layers and directions for the tasks ahead. Clearer operational and technical blueprints are relegated to the individual chapters – and 'data sets' as discursive territories – that follow.

The ontological and epistemological unease around discourse analysis – what is un/real, where is un/truth, how to un/do it? – has focused an inordinate amount of attention on matters methodological (Mills, 1997); most notably the discourse-decomposition, or how-to-analyze-it, element. In many discourse analytical expository or pedagogical texts, the generation, collection and selection of 'discourse' to analyze is fairly cursorily handled – that is, just use any demarcated piece of discourse that appears interesting, for whatever reason (Parker & Bolton Network, 1999) – relative to theory-dense methodological orientations towards 'actual analysis'. Parker and Burman's (1993) *32 problems with*

*discourse analysis* warned that this generates paralysis through positioning the 'method' as more important (and interesting) than 'the topic'. Potter (2002) echoes that 'treating method as the topic is not the same thing as trying to find something out' (p. 539).

This thesis does not necessarily seek to 'find things out'; but uses Foucault's theory of government to read qualitatively different statuses of discourse, in different ways, with respect to subject positioning. In the context of didactic texts on sexual health/risk and parenting, this attempted to suture subject positioning within textual practices, to wider discursive practices of positioning through text-production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough, 1995a).

The aims of the *Lovelines* text-series in *Fairlady*, and institutional conditions and politics of its production, were introduced in Chapter 1. The originally published *Lovelines* series of texts appears as Appendix 1. Figure 6 (overleaf) displays inter-textual synopses of the pedagogical domain, published in 17 fortnightly installments of approximately 500 words each. These synopses reiterate that *Lovelines* attempted to do more than 'simply' instruct mothers on how to talk with their children about sex. Curricular topics alternately address (a) sexually active women, (b) mothers, and seemingly (c) adolescent girls, with 'information' about sex, all manner of sexually transmitted risks/infections, gender differences and communication. As I will argue, this 'encoded' governmental sex curricula for women and their (men) sex partners, *and* for mothers and their daughters; and accorded powers of oversight between inter-subjective positions.

### Surfaces of emergence

As I have shown in previous chapters, *Lovelines* was part of wider, constitutive campaigning about HIV/Aids – an interstice-element of *Fairlady's* '*Breaking the silence*' and *loveLife's* (parent-directed) *Love them enough to talk about sex* campaigns. In Chapter 4, I configured the prodigious, flowing apparatus of mass-mediated campaigning, outreach activities/services, health organizational partnerships and corporate funding transactions in which *loveLife* is embedded; and also *loveLife's* insistence on global evaluation of branded

**Figure 6: Synopsis of *Lovelines* text-series in *Fairlady***

<i>Fairlady</i> issue	<i>Lovelines</i> column/text	Synopsis of content
No. 725 12 Apr 2000 p. 38	[1] <b>Let's talk about sex</b>	Mothers' problems that contribute to 'the spread of Aids' are: ignorance about HIV/Aids; denial of adolescent sexual activity; their resistance to talking about sex (with friends, partners, children); and their resistance to changing their own sexual behaviour. <i>Fairlady</i> and <i>loveLife</i> will provide information and tips to facilitate easier talk about sex in families.
No. 726 26 Apr 2000 p. 64	[2] <b>Sexual responsibility</b>	Sexual responsibility – at a personal level - involves taking precautions against pregnancy, HIV/Aids and STDs; and also taking care of one's body and soul. Parents' sexual responsibility involves communicating with children about sex, relationships and respect.
No. 727 10 May 2000 p. 56	[3] <b>Free to choose</b>	The notion of informed choice in sexuality means knowing one's rights; and knowing what one wants on one's sexual menu. 'Freedom to choose' refers to choice of a sexual partner, whether to have sex or not (and how), contraception and abortion. Women do not have to tolerate abuse, rape or violence; they should choose to be survivors rather than victims.
No. 728 24 May 2000 p. 63	[4] <b>From the horse's mouth</b>	A publicity blurb for <i>loveLife's</i> TV program, <i>S'camtu</i> , which aims to inform young people about their sexual rights, behaviour and choices; and encourages teenagers to talk about sex amongst themselves and with their parents. <i>loveLife</i> advocates a sex-positive approach, viz. "sex is normal and fun, let's do it and keep it healthy."
No. 729 7 June 2000 p. 75	[5] <b>In love again...</b>	The importance of (protective) safe sex practice for women/mothers in new relationships. Being choosy about partners, HIV-testing and male and female condoms are explored as options. Provides detailed medical information on microbicides (not yet available in South Africa).
No. 730 21 June 2000 p. 66	[6] <b>In love again...</b>	Men are not comfortable talking about their feelings or sexual fears, and are accustomed to doing what pleases them sexually. Men are unlikely to change. If women want to improve the quality of their sexual relationships, they must create a climate where sex can be talked about openly; and this includes articulating their sexual needs and pleasures, and taking a stand against harmful or unsafe sexual practices, e.g. 'dry sex'.

<i>Fairlady</i> issue	<i>Lovelines</i> column/text	Synopsis of content
No. 731 5 July 2000 p. 156	[7] <b>Straight talk</b>	Does your teenage daughter know when you had sex for the first time and with whom? Does she know whether you liked it? Here the importance of talking openly about sex and sexuality with adolescents is emphasized, to help them grapple with the issues that confront them and make responsible choices. Talking about sex does not encourage adolescent promiscuity; research cited suggests the opposite. Some tips on what to talk about, and how, are given.
No. 732 19 July 2000 p. 50	[8] <b>Safe sex and symptoms</b>	If a sex partner has been unfaithful, and didn't practice safe sex, the other partner could be infected with HIV – and women are particularly at risk. Having sex with someone means contact with their previous partners. Statistics are given for HIV+ rates and STIs at antenatal clinics. What to do? Talk to someone you trust; have an HIV-test; don't have sex until you know your status.
No. 733 2 Aug 2000 p. 34	[9] <b>Making a choice</b>	Explores factors in making the choice to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. Since 1997, South African women have the right to safe abortion, despite disapproval from some religious / cultural groups and health-care workers. Women are urged to seek counseling for information and support; and to prevent the risks and damages of teenage pregnancy.
No. 734 16 Aug 2000 p. 102	[10] <b>When puberty comes early</b>	Talking about sex with children from an early age has a positive influence on delaying sexual activity, and producing more responsible sexual behaviour, among teenagers. Puberty is occurring at increasingly early ages; this means children of 8-10 years should be prepared for physical, emotional and social changes. The 'taboos' of talking to children about sex are mentioned.
No. 735 30 Aug 2000 p. 40	[11] <b>How HIV/Aids affects our future</b>	Some population groups seem to be at higher risk of HIV/Aids than others (e.g. young women, the poor, truck-drivers, etc.), but nobody is immune. Statistical projections on current rates of HIV infection and Aids-related deaths suggest that no section of society will be unaffected. Youth are increasingly the target of various Aids-awareness drives, and evidence suggests increasing condom usage.

<i>Fairlady</i> issue	Lovelines column/text	Synopsis of content
No. 736 13 Sep 2000 p. 89	[12] <b>Who tells the truth about sexuality?</b>	Various media are a powerful influence in shaping attitudes and values in society, e.g. representation of women as sex objects. Finding realistic information about youth sexuality is difficult, and TV program like <i>S'camtu</i> and <i>Yizo Yizo</i> have filled this gap. Brochures and information from peers can be unreliable and sensationalised. Parents must be careful to pass on accurate information and unbiased perspectives about sexuality, gender and HIV/Aids to their children.
No. 737 27 Sep 2000 p. 48	[13] <b>Self-love</b>	South African adolescents are becoming sexually active at increasingly young age, when they are at risk of unwanted pregnancies, STIs and HIV/Aids. Normalizing perceptions of masturbation as a healthy form of sexual expression must be part of the effort to change adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviour.
No. 738 11 Oct 2000 p. 120	[14] <b>Sex in the city</b>	There are different contexts for sexuality development in South Africa. Teenagers are exposed to more promiscuous (and risky) sexual environments than their rural counterparts, e.g. drugs, alcohol, mall-trawling, commercial sex work. The answer is open communication with children with sex, and to guide them to making informed choices. "Preaching" doesn't work.
No. 739 25 Oct 2000 p. 72	[15] <b>Ways to say no</b>	Exciting and meaningful sex means that it must occur in a context of choice between consenting adults, give-and-take between equals. But, power imbalances exist in sex as a form of coercion, e.g. economic dependence, peer pressure, rape, abuse and violence. Encourage a culture of rights and self-esteem to enable saying 'yes' or 'no' to sex.
No. 740 8 Nov 2000 p. 117	[16] <b>The beginning and the end of life</b>	The importance of communication about sexuality with teenagers is emphasized, to prepare them for choices of whether to have sex or not, and whether to use a condom or not. This is due to early and normative adolescent sexual activity, and the risks of unwanted pregnancy and HIV/Aids. It is parents' responsibility to ensure teenagers' healthy psychological and physical growth into adults.
No. 741 22 Nov 2000 p. 126	[17] <b>Mother and child</b>	Explores the impact of the HIV/Aids pandemic on mothers and babies, e.g. anti-retroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child HIV-transmission, and breast-feeding.



impacts, rather than 'efficaciousness' or 'persuasiveness' of individual campaign elements per se.<sup>21</sup> Thus, selection of the *Lovelines* series for close textual/discursive examination was *not* regarded as 'representative' of *loveLife's* campaigning, and no claims of generality are made. Neither was it taken as representative of contemporary HIV-awareness campaigning directed at parents of risk-vulnerable children in South Africa. There are any number of competing local or national materials, programmes, advocacy groups and community-outreach or intervention projects in circulation, that have similarly (and critically) accelerated away from reliance on print media, e.g. *Soul City*, *CADRE*, and *CHAMP* (see Chapter 4).

Thus, I acknowledge that examination of other campaigns or campaign-elements, other transmission-channels of media, or even other print media texts might produce different angles on subject positioning and didactic representational effects. As would reading them with different theoretical lenses (e.g. simulation of 'reality effects': Baudrillard, 1990), or from different reading positions (e.g. resisting heterosexism of materials: Wilton, 1992; Wilton & Aggleton, 1991). My rationale for selection of *Lovelines* was threefold.

Foucault first: *Lovelines* provided a clearly demarcated and somewhat corroded surface for the emergence of prevailing subjective and inter-subjective positions of power and knowledge between experts themselves, and between experts, parents and children. *Lovelines* directly coupled government of women/mothers, childrearing technology and HIV/Aids risk-safety along the lines of Foucault's (1978) family-sexuality-risk configuration.

Secondly, my textual demarcation of *Lovelines* as print medium was predicated on an assumption that niche-audience construction would be more regulated. *LoveLife* had strategically approached *Fairlady* – as a national women's magazine, targeting, middle classed mothers – with the intention of pitching their sex-talking message to that particular 'interpretive community' of gendered subjects. This makes a critical point about 'access' to didactic media, and appropriation of messaging. Foucault (1978) assumed exposure of subjects to multivalent powers of circulating discourses; and Althusser (1971) and Parker

(1992) make immutable assumptions about the inescapability of interpellation. Marxist linguist, Pecheux (1982), was explicitly concerned with the question of 'class-privileged access' to discourses – through, for example, educated familiarity with knowledge-systems, languages and mediated information networks of economic capital; or psychologization of childrearing or risk-expertise. Thus, access to wider or rival resources for struggle, contestation, negotiated appropriation of positions, and disidentification, might be similarly class-privileged (Alldred, 1986a; Hall, 1980, 1997; Macdonell, 1986; Mills, 1997). This notion of 'access' is incorporated in Fairclough's (1995a) writings on media discourse practices through subject positioning being inscribed through interconnected encoding-decoding mechanisms of *explicitly targeted* text-production, circulation and interpretation.<sup>22</sup>

Thirdly, I had established privileged access to text-production machinery at *Fairlady* through previous research on their advice columns; and editorial staff was open to sharing difficulties in negotiation of the *Lovelines* series, and also why it was discontinued before the end of its scheduled run. The paucity of critical discourse analysis of text-production and encoding practices in media studies is said to be due to practical and interactional difficulties of researchers gaining access to, and acceptance by, media organizations (Garrett & Bell, 1998; Miller & Williams, 1998; Williams & Miller, 1998). Fairclough (1995a) comments that empirical examination of such media institutional procedures is harder to logistically organize, and to *do* analytically and ethically; thus, he settles for (convenient) in-depth and layered analyses of single texts. Sagely advice indeed; the institutional-ethnography and genealogical angles proved too unwieldy to represent 'briefly' – without unfolding intellectual, methodological and contextual scaffolding - in this thesis.

#### ***Fairlady*: text-production institutions as constitutive contexts of texts**

Fairclough's observation (above) about text-selection returns to the tensions between rival styles of social psychological discourse analysis, swinging between concerns with singular, isolated 'texts' for deconstructive examination (e.g. Parker, 1992), and situated 'contexts' in which texts and/or conversations are 'made to happen' (e.g. Fairclough, 1992, 1995a; Wetherell, 1998). This tension is particularly marked in Foucauldian-feminist approaches to

women's media discourse, where dilemmas of which texts to focus on (and why, and how) are seen to require careful contextualization within the practices of women's magazine publishing, and coverage of issues more generally in magazines themselves (McRobbie, 1991, 1994). This 'bigger picture' is drawn in/on in my work on *Lovelines* through deployment of Fairclough's (1995a) - Foucault-inflected – media discourse practices that incorporate critical attention to text-production, circulation and consumption. Although contextual-empirical chapters have been pruned away from this thesis, I have endeavoured to make the circuitry, conditions and institutional contexts of manufacture 'show' - both as 'rules of formation' of discourse, positions and interaction; and as machinery of governmental subjectification.

*Fairlady* is a nationally distributed women's magazine. It was established independently in South Africa in 1965 by editor Jane Raphaely (as opposed to globally syndicated/franchised women's magazines, like *Elle* or *Cosmopolitan*); and owned by *Nasionale Pers* (*Naspers*), a South African (public-service) print-media conglomerate, since the early-1980s. *Naspers* has uneasy economic and ideological roots in apartheid-State subsidization of Nationalist Party Government-mouthpiece Afrikaans newspapers, like *Die Burger* and *Rapport* (Berger, 2000). Although such direct political manipulation of 'news' was documented at the *South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC 1998), its effects in other forms of print media – women's magazines, for example – is unknown or unknowable. Stevenson (1995) comments (about British media) that direct causal links between media-mogul authoritarianism and 'ideological effects' on either coverage or audiences is difficult to 'prove'. *Naspers* has undergone post-apartheid corporate transformation at all levels - although rumours of conservatism stick – and now, incarnated as *Media24*, controls the interests of numerous daily, weekly, local and national newspapers; and 60% of South African magazines (Media24, 2005).

The 30 magazine titles within the *Media24*-corporate include 'weeklies' and 'glossies' in the categories of family, women, youth, sport/health, financial and specialist – with 8 dedicated 'women's magazine' titles, including *Fairlady* (Media24, 2005). This multiplicative background is significant, because the explicitly aged, classed, raced, acculturated (in terms

of language-spoken) and gendered niche-marketing of a particular magazine is justified in terms of its 'subject positioning' and 'market positioning' relative to others in the corporate stable; even while target audience homogeneity breaks down in practice of consumption (Paice & O'Sullivan, 1999). Thus, if *Fairlady* appears to target (mostly) white, middle-classed, English-speaking women; *Sarie* caters for a similarly classed category of Afrikaans-speaking women; *True Love* addresses 'upwardly-mobile African-Black', English-speaking women, and so on (Media24, 2005). Such distinctive audience parameters had fairly profound effects of inclusion and exclusion of classed mothers with respect to (racialized) risks of HIV/Aids in *Lovelines*, in *Fairlady* (see Chapters 6, 7 & 8).

*Fairlady*, at the time of publication of the *Lovelines* series in 2000, had an audited fortnightly circulation of 105 500 (*Audit Bureau of Circulation: ABC*, 2000). The estimated readership of 725 000 was constituted as 74% female, 52% white, 40% employed part-time, 63% mothers (versus 'childfree' readers), 90% urban-dwelling (in cities/towns), and read and/or accessed by a wide range of age-groups in families (*All Media Products Survey: AMPS*: 2000). Such readership statistics are strongly historicized and contingent in women's magazines: they are situated as products in competitive market economies that vie and scramble for limited numbers of women-consumers; and magazines constantly 're-position' themselves in relation to shifting 'target markets' (Winship, 1987). This involves routine tweaking of editorial mission on the basis of 'demographics' of readership; and directly relates to issues such as: cover price of the magazine; race of 'cover-girl' images depicted (sic); type-face and layout used; minimum/maximum issue-lengths specified; frequency of circulation adopted; products advertised; kind of informative feature articles covered; and 'psycho-graphic profile' of the woman-reader espoused and pitched at (cf. Coward, 1984; Fairclough, 1995a; McRobbie, 1991; Winship, 1987).

And all of this effort to produce particular effects of subject and market positioning, viz. (a) to 'render *Fairlady* accessible as a brand real women can relate to and identify with', and (b) to 'differentiate *Fairlady* from its competition' (*Magazines in Focus*, 2000, p. 17). Thus, while *Fairlady* is explicitly targeted at married or divorced women, about 35 years old, who are probably part-time working mothers, extraordinarily refined 'psychological positioning'

allows the *Fairlady*-style of address to 'find' – or fabricate - such gendered subjects along particular lines. I have selected some positioning statements about *Fairlady*-readers from a *Media24* publication for advertisers (Magazines in Focus, 2000, p. 17):

- ❑ She is likely to be married, probably with children, working part-time; she likes and is comfortable around men; she is proudly South African.
- ❑ The 'crises' of her twenties are behind her, and she is comfortable with being older and wiser; the questions outweigh the answers in her life, and she still may have 'fat days', but she brings humour, balance and stability into all she does.
- ❑ She wants information on how to improve and nurture herself and the significant people in her life – in all the roles she plays, as mother, wife, lover, career woman, friend and creative person.
- ❑ She wants information conveyed in a warm and intimate tone.

The strategic alliance between *Fairlady* and *loveLife* in 2000 that produced the sex-pedagogical series of *Lovelines*, was of course, not the first or the final word in *Fairlady* on the imperative conversations between women and children/partners about sex. My genealogical chapters - excised from this thesis – examined the historicized positioning of sexual communication in families in the *Fairlady*-archive of 775 fortnightly or monthly magazines issues from 1965 to 2003. This work mapped the discursive contours and swerves of complex inter-textual representations related to *inter alia* (a) 'sex education in the home', (b) 'adolescent sexual risk', (c) mothers' responsibilities for accomplishing (a) to prevent (b), and (d) mothers' 'unwillingness' to do this for a variety of reasons. These risk-prophylactic representations have been constantly recycled, and relentlessly re-inscribed, for 38 years in *Fairlady*. A total of 204 full-length feature articles appeared in this archive concerned with communication about sex in the family, and historically shifting risks faced by children/youth (latterly, HIV/Aids).

The didactic *Lovelines* series was one of five such serialized deployments of out-sourced 'expert-curricula' on adolescence/puberty, sexuality awareness, sexual risks and importance of communication that appeared in the *Fairlady*-archive, 1965-2003. A summary table of these ancestral curricula appears as Appendix 4. This genealogical work will be published

elsewhere, but is mentioned here to underscore the historicized fabrication of mother-teenager inter-subjectivities as governmental sites of sex implantation and risk surveillance, with HIV/Aids over-written onto prior threats to social stability and prosperity. These series demonstrate shifting forms of 'double address' of 'adolescents' (about their own bodies), *and* mothers as primary readers of *Fairlady*, thereby constituting mutual oversight over positioning. This idea is picked up in my analysis chapters that follow.

### The way forward: maps, tactics, textual territories

The chapters that follow hold steady a focus on the 'preferred' positioning of mothers as talkers to children about sex in families, but the analytical gaze shifts as different textual territories and communicative events – around the *Lovelines* series - come into view. As I have suggested, the overall design, an investigation of discourse practices at various levels, is inscribed by Fairclough's (1992, 1995a) approach to the inter-discursivity and inter-textuality of media discourse. Further technical methodological lenses are negotiated at the beginning of each new chapter; my aim here is to indicate general directions and to highlight broad (and witting) counter-points between them.

Chapters 6 and 7 tackle *Lovelines* texts themselves, and deploy a broadly-Parkerian (Parker, 1992) approach to texts as 'addressors' (cf. Althusser, 1971) – reading the ways texts hail, position and persuade audiences of women (as sexual partners of men, as mothers of daughters) with normalizing, pedagogical 'expert information' about sex, sexual risk and communication about sex. Chapter 6 examines broader (ideological) subject positioning of women/mothers as 'talkers' and adolescents as 'risky' within existing power relations, ruling class interests and dominant worldviews; and finds the familial domestic cell set up to produce planes of surveillance over subjects positioned relationally to one another. Chapter 7 examines the government of the micro-practices of inter-subjective 'relationship' between mothers and adolescent daughters (mostly) – circling around the management of 'unwillingness' to talk to one another about sex.

Parker's (1992) guidelines for praxis have discourses hailing/addressing subjects as particular kinds of people, inscribing action, obligations and rights. Although Parker's analytical attention to fewer anchor texts is sustained, this is not a slavish following. I explore, how a genre of didactic, health promotional media texts resist the univocality/determinism of Althusserian ideological apparatus, and push for examination of a plethora of textualized and rhetorical subject positioning tactics to 'persuade' (and so, slowly shape and govern) the lifestyles, psyches and relationships of subjects (e.g. Fairclough, 1992; Hall, 1997). In texts that are targeted at maternal (primary) and youthful (secondary) audiences, and which deal specifically with 'parent-child relationship', I explore how notions of 'double audience' and 'parallax effect' constantly re-inscribe relational positional negotiation, re-scripting and governing surveillance over inter-subjectivities (e.g. Said, 1985; Smith, 1990; Zizek, 1989).

Fairclough's (1995a, 1998) 2<sup>nd</sup> CDA model is used as spine/tool in this thesis, as foundational discourse practices for positioning. My strategic use of his tools is rhetorical (about 'persuasion'), and textural (about subject/reading positions), rather than linguistic, grammatical or 'conversation analytic' in the strict disciplinary senses of these labels.

Chapter 8 gives parents as text-consumers a chance to 'talk back' to *Lovelines* texts, and to my prior analysis of them; although, obviously, their spirited talk was regarded as 'textual', and read by myself in particular ways (cf. Mills, 1994). Focus group technology was thus used to generate conversation about appropriation of a particular *Lovelines* text (*Straight Talk*), with the intention of subjecting it to a particular kind of theoretical reading. This reading of reflexive and interactive subject positioning through the narrative of discussions – following Wetherell (1998) – expected to find (partially) preferred, collusive appropriations of 'expertise', and adversarial, idiosyncratic, defensive and creative negotiations around the sticky limits of inscribed discursive positions of childrearing, and talking about sex in families, along the (ex-colonized) rifts of class, cultures, race and gender.

The group discussions do *not* masquerade as 'naturally occurring discourse' (cf. Potter, 2002, 2003b); they were 'set up' to produce resistances through constituting them 'outside'

of the interpretive community of targeted *Fairlady*-readers. The women and men discussants of *Lovelines* were 'mature students' – parents and professional teachers/lecturers – in a (part-time) postgraduate course I taught at a South African university in 2001. Discussions were audio-taped, and analyzable discourse produced through transcription that captured content of 'conversations' – what was said by whom – rather than according to formal and more elaborate Jeffersonian linguistic conventions.

All effort was taken in transcription and analysis to change significant subjective details to protect anonymity of discussion participants. Names are pseudonyms. When material is omitted from the quotation of text, this is indicated by an ellipsis within a pair of square brackets, thus [...]; and when the content or flow of an extract is disrupted by omitted material, clarification is square bracketed, thus [this should help] (adapted from Atkinson and Heritage, 1984).

Finally, permission was received from *Fairlady* to reproduce published material in this thesis, with the understanding that interpretations of it were my own. Then-editor of *Fairlady*, Alice Bell, requested that her voice/signature be represented through published editorial texts in *Fairlady*, rather than personal interviews (see Chapter 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Coyle (2000) has argued that discourse analysis was 'popularized', and 'rendered accessible' within social psychology, by Potter and Wetherell's (1987) seminal text, *Discourse and social psychology*.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault repeatedly resisted intellectual attempts to fence him into a unitary position or linear narrative of 'organic development' of his ideas. These authors offer genealogical interpretations of what Foucault termed 'author-function'. In Foucault's (1971, 1984c) version of 'death of the author' then, the author ceases to be the originator of meanings of texts, but a 'signature', which becomes, for the reader, a form of organization for groupings of discourses in diverse texts. This is a crucial idea when thinking of *loveLife*-branded programming in a global way.

<sup>3</sup> Carla Willig's (2001) generic definition of 'Foucauldian discourse analysis' is an example of this trend. Her earlier work consistently claims to be 'Foucauldian' because of following Ian Parker's (1992) analytical guidelines – which my later analysis will show to be multivalent – and finds 'discourses' (or sometimes 'discursive constructions') of condom-use, trust and romance in interview-material, that are somewhat severed from their constitution within institutional knowledge/power bases (e.g. Willig, 1995, 1997, 1999b). Similar arguments have been lodged



against Hollway's (1984a) so-called 'Foucauldian' analyses (see Widdicombe, 1992). I return to these critiques later.

<sup>4</sup> In later (genealogical) writing, Foucault (1984b) included 'socio-historical phenomena' (p. 77) in his archive, most notably cultural artifacts (literature, painting), and so-called extra-discursive sites (prisons, political demonstrations, bathhouses).

<sup>5</sup> Hollway's (1984a) psychoanalytic (Object Relations) approach to subject positioning is included here, critically rather than admiringly, as a 'foil' against which discursive and interactively constituted subjectivities are fabricated in Parker's (1992) and Wetherell's (1998) accounts. I seek to distinguish her approach from others, and to caution against the simplistic citation of her work/method as backup for analyses of positioning (e.g. Edley, 2001; Harre & Langenhove, 1999a).

<sup>6</sup> Harre and Langenhove (1999a, p. 16) unequivocally state that their interactional/narrative approach to positioning is in line with Hollway's psychoanalytical usage. This is because Positioning Theory focuses on how intra- and interpersonal psychological phenomena are produced in discourse. I am not convinced (1) that Hollway (1984a) is arguing along these narrative lines (see her 'thematic', non-interactive extracts to support inter-subjective positioning claims); and neither of (2) the wisdom of Harre and Langenhove's globalizing approach to positioning that may be applied to individuals and groups in unilateral ways.

<sup>7</sup> FANI assumes - according to a Kleinian notion of subjectivity that 'splits good from bad' as an unconscious defense against anxiety, ambivalence and pain (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 59) - that interviewees will present particular (elaborated, partial, slanted, even untrue) accounts of themselves and their social experiences as 'defended subjects' (cf. Thomas, 1996a, 1996b).

<sup>8</sup> Parker's (2005) latest explication of how-to-do an analysis of discourses focuses on the Margaret Thatcher joke, and refers to my writing (Wilbraham, 2004a) for a 'fully worked-up' theoretical and political account of procedures, process and implications (Parker, 2005, p. 93).

<sup>9</sup> I do not elaborate on the theoretical/methodological framework of deconstruction here (see reviews and commentaries: Collins & Mayblin, 1998; Culler, 1979, 1983; Dews, 1987; Eagleton, 1983; Hepburn, 1999; Powell, 1997). Hepburn's (1999) critique of Parker's partial and technical 'abuses' of Derrida's deconstruction is particularly cogent; as is her appraisal of the usefulness of deconstruction's anti-foundationalism in critical endeavour (contra Burman, 1990b).

<sup>10</sup> An example will clarify this stance. In the representation of 'teenage pregnancy' in a media text, institutionalized truth effects might be achieved through deployment of 'quantification rhetoric' (epidemiological statistics) as an empirical trace of reality (see Potter, Wetherell & Chitty, 1991). Parker's (1992) deconstructive tactics would expose what this empirical trace '*mis*-represents' - for example, *whose* empiricism dis/appears; or how *mis*-identification of an isolated 'cause' of the 'problem' excludes local historical or material conditions, or conversely, reproduces effects of gendered, classed, racialized and acculturated discrimination of a particular group of 'victims' (of particular interest in post-apartheid South Africa). These other histories, realities, and discourses, are called up/on. This Marxist position was adopted by Warren Parker's (2003, 2005a, 2005b) critical readings of '*loveLife* propaganda' in terms of its interested, witting *mis*representations of empirical facts and realities (see Chapter 4).

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Potter (2004a) has formulated his style/school of close analysis of detailed interactive discourse. He prefers to analyze 'naturally occurring talk' (e.g. counseling sessions, helplines, family dinner-table conversations) - meaning that such talk would 'happen anyway' without the researcher's active contrivance to generate it through an interview or discussion, the dominant qualitative research technologies of psychological investigation. Parker's favor for public domain texts fits within this 'natural' specification, although does not explain a preference for writing over speech. Potter (2002) concedes that generated analytical material can be 'naturalized' through analyzing it as constructive, situated interaction; and not looking for truths about objects/people beyond or inside the respondents' language itself (cf. Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Derrida's deconstructionist privileging of writing (*logocentrism*) over speech (*phonocentrism*) goes way beyond convenience and practicality (Hepburn, 2003). Priority given to 'voice' – for example, through interviews, conversations, one's own words (Potter & Hepburn, 2005) – is as the direct, accessible, authentic and immediate form of expression that assumes a metaphysics of 'presence' or 'being there' (Collins & Mayblin, 1998) – as foundational authority. Speakers may thus refer to themselves as unified, self-conscious, spontaneous originators of meaning, and as authentically expressing 'themselves' (Marks, 1996). Derrida posits a speech-writing hierarchy, where speech is the centre and writing is a derivative imitation of speech; and writing is about 'absence' – meaning that meaning is always deferred elsewhere – rather than presence (Dews, 1987). Derrida's deconstruction reverses the hierarchy, re-writing the privileged term as writing, and the new hierarchy as writing-speech (Hepburn, 1999). Deconstruction is thus applied to *written* texts; and the dicta of 'death of the author' and 'birth of the reader' apply.

<sup>13</sup> This is a tactic akin to Fairclough's (1995a) in-depth analysis of single public domain texts. The key difference from Parker's (1992) deconstructive readings of isolated texts (in relation to general social realities beyond it) is that Fairclough – following Foucault – reads texts in relation to webs of other texts, and the rules (of formation), forces and discursive practices that govern the manufacture of texts in particular socio-cultural or institutional contexts (cf. Mills, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> This understanding of the circulation of discourses through proliferating textual signification (cf. Lacan) upgrades Foucault's (1972, 1978) versions of 'modes for speaking' and 'statuses' within discourse that are available to subjects to be located in, in various sites and relations of power.

<sup>15</sup> Classical Marxism – stereotypically – stresses the importance of State-power, where the status quo (ruling class interests) is maintained through control of access to the means of economic production, and through ideological manipulation as 'false consciousness' (Mills, 1997). Several schools of Neo-Marxism (e.g. Gramsci, 1971; Habermas, 1989; Pecheux, 1982) have moved away from 'brute economism' towards less reductive forms of power, coercion and regulation – for example, through discourse, discursive struggle, hegemony, or material micro-practices of ideology – although totalizing State and ruling class interests are still served (cf. 'Western Marxism': Howarth, 2000). Althusser's theory of interpellation is thought to fit here.

<sup>16</sup> I have in mind here Williamson's (1978, 1986) trenchant analyses of advertisements – as texts of popular culture that address readers/viewers with a 'difference' between two counterpoised systems of signification – one that is recognized as familiar and problematical (e.g. fat-me), and one that is recognized as unfamiliar and ideal (e.g. Pill-X associated with thin-me). This 'difference' is negotiated through ideological and psychical mechanisms of scaffolding a sense of 'lack', propagandizing false realities, structuring desirous counter-identifications, and effectively transferring meaning from one signification system to the other. The function here is economic exploitation – to make us buy things – but the ideological/psychoanalytic confluence is finely etched: to knit us into participation in dominant symbolic/material orders of society, that serve interests other than our own.

<sup>17</sup> Parker's warring (and ungrounded) miscellany of intellectual borrowings is contrasted with Fairclough's (2001) 3<sup>rd</sup> model of CDA. Here, Fairclough carefully works threads into a broader analytical tapestry of critical realism through alliance with 'Western Marxism'. While this does not entirely dissolve Foucault's antipathy towards the Marxist notion of ideology as a 'realm of dubious ideas' (p. 233) and monolithic economic determinism, it finds/forges connecting nodes between divergent lines of materialist theoretical thought. Thus, for example, from Gramsci's (1971) notion of 'hegemony' as power-struggle contingent on persuasion to win consent and collusion; and Althusser's (1971) notion of ideology as an apparatus of material social practices operating through institutions (rather than unilateral hailing/duping of captive subjects) (cf. Fairclough, 2001, p. 232-234).

<sup>18</sup> Wittgenstein's (1958) key metaphor, 'language games', emphasized the role the adept and active language-user played in these 'games', each with different aims, rules and sites (e.g. giving orders, putting forward or defending an argument, talking to a child about sex, etc.).

<sup>19</sup> Potter and Wetherell's (1987) early work claimed too to be 'inductive'; it claimed to *describe* the patterns, repertoires, rules, discrepancies and effects that emerged through close examination of a particular context of everyday interactive language use, this modeled on preceding micro-sociological traditions of ethno-methodology (e.g. Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1981) and conversation analysis (e.g. Sacks, 1992). Fairclough (1992) dubbed Potter and Wetherell's (1987) early discourse analytic approach 'descriptive', differentiating it from 'critical' (Marxist, post-structuralist) approaches that focalized workings of power and ideology, and social transformation. This binary opposition tends (a) to gloss the interpretive work inherent in Potter and Wetherell's reading of language-function; and (b) to eclipse the (wider) critical argumentation to which so-called 'descriptive' work may be put (e.g. resistance to mainstream cognitivism).

<sup>20</sup> For more and more skirmishing on this matter, see Billig (1999b & 1999c) and Schegloff 1999a & 1999b).

<sup>21</sup> Indeed, *loveLife* was reluctant to participate in interviews about the *Lovelines*-texts for other aspects of my study on institutional text-production procedures. They accounted for this – and their hostility towards my 'close-grained academic readings' – through reiterating commitment to global evaluation of brand awareness and behavioral indicators (rather than individual campaign elements), viz. the non-representative sampling of one isolated, miniscule piece of their broad-mosaic campaigning produced 'conservative' and 'outdated' critique of particular texts that did not reflect (a) 'strategies' of text-producers, (b) inter-textual processes that acknowledged diversity and complementarity of channels of media transmission, and (c) 'effects' on parenting behaviour as an endpoint. The rationale for this position is carefully reviewed in Chapter 4.

<sup>22</sup> Fairclough (1995a) suggests that empirical attention to 'access' might be directed towards (a) how media texts are encoded/scheduled to 'fit' accessibly into (targeted) consumers' lives (institutional level); (b) how inter-textual chains of versions aim to 'close down' oppositional readings (discursive level); and (c) asking readers how particular readings were arrived at (micro-level) (p. 59). This thesis focuses on (a) and (c).

## CHAPTER 6

### SURVEILLANCE OF FAMILIES – POSITIONING MOTHERS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND RISK-EXPERTISE

#### 1. MAPPING METHODOLOGY

##### Texts, territories, tactics

This and the following chapter take *Lovelines* texts (themselves) as a particular genre of health informational 'media discourse', to read the ways texts hail, position and persuade an audience of classed, raced and gendered subjects (*Fairlady* readers). Their division of analytical labour – and discursive territory – is as follows.

*This chapter* establishes the surveillance of familial sex-communicative functioning through broad-brush, discursive and ideological positioning of women as talkers about sex (to children, and to men), and their 'teenaged' daughters (in particular), in relation to scientific and epidemiological risk-expertise. Risks related to the sexual health of youth are mobilized around western psy-complex dicta of a storm-and-stress model of adolescence, and normative assumptions about gendered sexualities. This fabricates the familial/domestic cell in terms of hierarchically layered planes of oversight, with (panoptic) experts, (custodial) women/mothers and (vulnerable, sexy and recalcitrant) children structurally positioned in (febrile) power relations with one another. The power-filled dynamics of persuasive positioning are given force within an age of epidemic in South Africa, which tasks women/mothers – as malleable subjective mediators of risk – with particular kinds of sexualized inscription of children.

*Chapter 7* extends this governmental idea of 'relationship' between expertise, mothers and children/youth, but in the way of the minutiae of conversational tactics and topics that are inter-subjectively scaffolded between them. This examines how dominant psy-complex discourses around parenting techniques are deployed to govern micro-practices

of mother-child communication about sex. While this chapter works to unpick how *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers' 'custodial willingness' to talk about sex in these ways is fabricated along roiling discursive parameters of blanket-risks, Chapter 7 deals with the textualized 'training' of mothers to practically accomplish a curriculum of such conversations with apparently unwilling adolescent co-communicators.

The 'Foucauldian' discourse analytical orientation towards subject positioning followed in these two chapters is broadly Ian Parker's – but not slavishly or unequivocally so. Parker's (1992) preliminary steps in his deconstructive guidelines incorporate demarcating texts, as pieces of broader discourse, as objects of examination; and exploring the discourses 'at work' in these texts (p. 7). Unraveling this discursive work proceeds through intuitive, exploration (cf. 'free association') guided by Parker's ten definitional criteria pertaining to discourses. Thus discourses appear as coherent, regulated, historicized and institutionally generated systems of statements about objects and subjects, that refer to and defend themselves against other (truthful or untruthful) knowledge-systems; they constitute subjects through offering particular categories of action to be adopted; and they reproduce (oppressive) relations of power through ideological effects (p. 3-22; see Chapter 5).

Parker (1992) scaffolds an approach to public domain texts as 'addressors' (cf. Althusser, 1971); and thus, discourses of risk, childrearing, communication or gendered sexualities (as objects/phenomena), may contain/hail subjects, through making accessible 'positions' for certain types of self to be performed through particular styles and techniques of discursive practice. The adoption of such positioning and technologization of a self – effectively becoming an individual 'bearer of discourse' - confers knowledge and powers that implicate rights and responsibilities. Thus, Parker (1992) suggests the following analytical questions are germane to the task of unpacking subject positions: (a) who is addressed by this text, and how?; (b) what are they expected to do when so addressed?; and (c) what obligations are bestowed on these subjects? (p. 10).

Parker (1994) then developed (rather bewildering) a-b-c-d-etcetera guidelines through his analysis of utility instructions on a children's toothpaste tube. These guidelines worked through identification of objects and subjects, constituted through various discourses, in this toothpaste-text; and the situation of these within a wider macrocosm of power relationships, ruling class interests and worldviews. This is similar to Fairclough's (1995a) attention to the multi-functionality of textual practices in terms of 'positioning' – viz. texts construct *worldviews*, possibly carrying ideologies, *identities*, as subject positions, and *relationships*, as in expert-laity, mother-child, etc. (p. 58; see Chapter 5).

However, inevitably several sharp twists and turns have to be negotiated when different kinds of discourse, texts and surfaces of emergence are encountered – and different questions are posed to texts. Within the genre of didactic mass mediated discourse about sexual health and childrearing in Chapters 6 and 7, my misappropriation of Parker's (1992) guidelines on subject positioning relate to extending the univocal limits of Althusser/Parker's authoritarian (Marxist) apparatus of ideological hailing, towards an armory of other 'Foucauldian' tools to unpick rhetorical textual practices of persuasion, relational positional negotiation and inter-subjectivities, and inter-textuality.

Parker (1994) argues, for example, that the toothpaste-text schools parents in the imperative practice of brushing young children's teeth; and this places them – within discourses of hygiene - in conventionally familial, custodial/pedagogical power relations over children. Parker-the-Marxist is suspicious of the ruling classed interests and unequal power relations served by institutional expertise. But, conspiratorial plots of 'ideological government' of personal/public health aside (e.g. mothers are targeted as talkers about sex to children, and their teeth-brushers), how exactly are parental subjects persuaded to take up beneficent actions, and how are other inter-subjective relationships constituted, e.g. writer-reader trust, expert-mother authority, woman-partner intimacy, etc. (cf. Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1972)?

## Persuasive, beneficent positioning

Stuart Hall (1997) – theorizing the Foucauldian operations of discourse through forms of representation and address - argues that discourses produce *multiple* subject positions as categories of action that ‘personify’ or ‘figure’ the particular forms of knowledge the discourses construct. Thus, several types of subject positions might be offered simultaneously that make sense to readers as normal individuals; for example, *extreme transgressor positions* as in ‘the sexually active child’ or ‘the neglectful mother’; *positions in power relation to other positions* as in parent-child or husband-wife relations; *normal-but-problematical positions* as in ‘the embarrassed mother’ or ‘the shy child’; and *ideal positions* as in ‘the good mother’ or ‘the sex-abstinent teenager’ (cf. Hall, 1997, p. 40; Wilbraham, 2004a).

This is a crucial multifocal lens in reading didactic media discourse in this and the following chapter, where *Lovelines* constantly counterpoises complex matrices of (a) *dispreferred normal-but-problematical positions* (embarrassed women *do not* talk openly about sex), with (b) *preferred ideal positions* (women *should* talk openly about sex); and actively seeks to persuade and shift positioning of women-readers from one identification to another, i.e. from (a) to (b). This works with subjective shifts between *what-is-risky (as-we are)*, and *what-is-safe (as-we-should-be)*, as well as negotiating obstacles, resistances and slippages within such shifts.

This proliferation and flow of representations that are rhetorically geared towards persuasive interpellation - and inevitably slip or miss their target to some extent – break down monolithic hailing, and show power shifting and scrambling uneasily around. To articulate this sense of inter-subjectivity – as relationships between positions - I have drawn on two ‘positioning ideas’ from divergent, but equally dense and slippery praxes. Both are inflections rather than explicit tools; and the borrowing is strategic – an agenda to break determinism - rather than sustained or systematic. My interest in them as inflections of inter-subjectivities is Foucauldian, in the sense of power relations and subject positions constituted through discourse.

First, Parker's univocal hailing (and self-recognition) of subjects is twisted along the lines of postmodern readership theory (of literary fiction, of media discourse). Here, Žižek's (2003) notions of 'double-audience' or 'parallax effect' articulate the constant shifts in perspective that deprive readers of a single point of identification (mothers to daughters to mothers); and work instead to position readers within a bound-together assemblage, an inter-subjective identification as a nodal point (mother-daughter relationship). Žižek (1989) works here with the Lacanian idea of 'quilting', where the individual subject 'stitches together' identities and relationships through identifying with various signifying/significant nodal points (ETC, 2005).

This is a crucial lens in reading *Lovelines*, which addresses adult *and* young women's sexual health risks, while inscribing inter-generational communication (between them) about sex; and in understanding broad age-ranges in access to *Lovelines* in *Fairlady* by several members of family cells (e.g. mothers, teenage daughters, grandmothers). In these ways, maternal/custodial and 'teenager' positions are placed in shifting relationships of mutual recognition, identification, interconnection and surveillance over one another. Said (1985) has also constituted audiences in this split-planed way of mutual surveillance.

Second, this process of 'relational inter-textual negotiation' of positions – rather than simple ideological hailing – is seen by feminist-Foucauldian sociologist, Dorothy Smith (1990), to implicate women-readers in actively working through subject positions in a process of negotiating discursive constraints. This pivots on two crucial textual aspects, seemingly neglected by Parker, that Smith (1990) finds to break down the immutably effective abstraction of 'hailing', and to open up spaces for insurrection and re-scripting. (1) Modern readers are seldom (if ever) confronted with a univocal instructional text; and inter-textuality (even within a single text) produces contradictory subjective nodes (cf. Mills, 1997). (2) Texts do not construct or offer 'selves', but they display variously dys/functional inter-subjectivities as their discursive bounds, through which positioning is navigated. Thus, through 'the actual relations vested in texts' (Smith, 1990, p. 163), readers grapple with disciplinary power in personal and interpersonal ways, in everyday



micro-practices, to varying and partial degrees, rather than simply adopting (saying yes to) or resisting (saying no to) preferred ideological meanings.

Thus, Parker's critical penchant for (only) 'highlighting and dismantling [ideological] textual assumptions' (Hepburn, 1999, p. 643) is extended through explicit attention to rhetorical tactics of persuasion that operate in texts (Fairclough, 1992). This chapter circles around 'modality' (as degree of truth-force) of statistical and epidemiological statements of HIV-contagion and risk – imported as vigorous voices, echoes and inter-texts - and interpretation of their authority, legitimization and effects in terms of government of a particularly targeted audience of reading subjects. I eschew Fairclough's (1995a) closer-grained 'linguistic analysis' of texts, but more broadly attend to representational practices that establish preferred 'identities' (subject positions) and 'relationships' (inter-subjectivities) (p. 58).

A final point relates to selection of texts to read. Parker's (1992) and Fairclough's (1992) focus on solitary, public domain texts is tested through my selection of a bigger corpus, the *Lovelines* series, consisting of seventeen 500-word texts (see Figure 6 in Chapter 5; and original texts in Appendix 1). However, their sound tactics of unpacking fewer anchor texts in their entirety (or nearly so) in sustained analytical detail – rather than extracting clumps of abstracted meanings from everywhere (cf. 'thematic analysis') – is maintained. This is inscribed by the intention to examine the fraught lattice-work of lines of force, and nodal points of interconnection and contradiction, that drive subject positioning as a textual practice - and also as constituted within discourse practices of text-production and distribution for a *particular* audience of subjects.

Parker (1992) suggests that the selection of 'a text' for analysis is premised on giving it another reality – reading its 'ideological work' as 'addressor' – and as such, regarding it as a 'surface of emergence' for particular discursive configurations that the discourse analyst recognizes, and wishes to explore/expose, for whatever reason. Thus, *Lovelines* texts were selected from the corpus for examination, because they (1) deployed a particular agenda (e.g. 'sets up' aims of the *Lovelines* series, or 'adolescence' along the

lines of storm-and-stress assumptions); or (2) displayed contradictory subjective positions (and inter-subjectivities) for mothers and daughters, that were 'resolved' in particular ways.

Therefore, 'typicality' of texts selected – to the *Lovelines* series, *Fairlady* magazine, *loveLife* messaging, or the whole motley domain of sexual health education materials for parents – was not at issue. Other texts and other readings (using different theoretical lenses) might possibly configure positions and practices using similar/different discursive apparatus. Lastly, my analysis of subject positions reads selected aspects of *Lovelines*, and does not seek to produce a descriptive synopsis of the domain, or a serial narrative of incremental awareness, as a *Fairlady* reader might chronologically read, from Text 1 to 17. Full texts or fragments are incorporated into Chapters 6 and 7 haphazardly; Figure 6 in Chapter 5 produces serial synopses and *Lovelines* texts in originally published form appear as Appendix 1. Text-producers (*Fairlady* and *loveLife*) and text-consumers (parents) have an opportunity to 'talk back' to my readings in Chapters 7 and 8.

## 2. ADDRESSING MOTHERS

Analysis begins through demarcation of the introductory column in the *Lovelines* series as TEXT 1 (overleaf). This text sets up the aims of *Lovelines*, and deploys several tactics of persuasion to apparently de-traditionalize or refold women, inscribing them with a modernizing sexual imperative to 'wise up' and 'open up' (cf. repressive hypothesis: Foucault, 1978).

### Custodial responsibilities

The calculation of *Fairlady*'s audience-reach and psycho-graphic profile suggests that Text 1 addresses women who are mothers (mostly). This is a wily tactic in terms of the government of sexuality, for through access to mothers-as-subjects as a relay point, the two axes along which sex as Foucault's (1978) deployment of alliance is policed in

### TEXT 1

*Lovelines 1: Fairlady, 12 April 2000, p. 38*

#### Let's talk about sex

So you think you know everything there is to know about sex? You're as comfortable discussing your bedroom antics over a cappuccino with a friend as planning your child's next birthday party? If so, you're certainly not the norm.

Although there's overwhelming evidence that South Africans of all walks of life are becoming more sexually promiscuous, most of us would rather die than talk about our sex life. Sure, men banter about getting women into bed and women use a discreet code to share their sexual fantasies. But frank, open discussion of sex as a natural, healthy, fun part of life is still not on.

When we look at what's happening in some other countries, it's clear that our reluctance to talk about sex normally has backfired. In Holland and France, where sex education starts as early as five or six years, young people start having sex about four years later than those in, for example, prudish Britain, where sex before marriage is strongly discouraged. Teenage pregnancy rates are also much lower in countries where sex education starts at an early age. And in the United States, where it's still not acceptable to show a condom on commercial television, teenage pregnancy rates are the worst among industrialized nations. Four in 10 young US women fall pregnant at least once by the age of 20.

South Africans are catching up fast. Children as young as 10 are experimenting with sex – and some are sexually active even before they start menstruating. South Africa also has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world. According to statistics of the Medical Research Council, one in three teenage girls will be pregnant before the age of 20, while national statistics attribute between 40 and 50% of all live births to teenagers.

Among adults, our tight-lipped attitude to sexual issues has contributed to higher rates of divorce, sexual violence and domestic abuse, and greater prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as chlamydia and gonorrhea, experts believe. South African studies have shown that 30 percent of adults in urban communities have a STD. This makes them five to 20 times more likely to contract HIV should they have sex with an HIV-positive person. Ignorance about HIV/Aids and STDs and resistance to changing sexual behaviour contribute to the spread of Aids.

The only way to change all of this is to become more open about sex to your friends, your partner and your children, particularly teenagers. Odds are your attitude to sex is a hangover from your parents. If they were like most of their peers, they rarely spoke about sex in anything but the most perfunctory and embarrassed way. Yet it's never too soon and never too late to start educating your children about their sexuality and the pleasure of sex with a loving partner.

Sex is a basic instinct. Take advantage of the fact that we live in an age of advanced contraceptive technology and expert information on HIV/Aids. You can protect your children from inaccurate information about sex, and help them to make informed choices. The first step is to accept sex as a normal, healthy part of life. And then to talk about it. In fact, this is the motto of *loveLife*, an organization that over the past few years has been researching ways to promote changes in sexual behaviour. In this way, *loveLife* hopes to help curb the HIV/Aids epidemic in South Africa. One

thing *loveLife* has learnt so far, says executive member Judi Nwokedi, is that contrary to the popular belief of parents, openness about sex does not lead children to greater promiscuity.

Over the next year, Fairlady and *loveLife*, through this regular column, will provide you with the information and practical tips to help you talk about sex more easily in your family. The rest will be up to you.

For more information, contact *loveLife* at Box 45, Parklands 2121 or email [talk@loveLife.org.za](mailto:talk@loveLife.org.za).

**loveLife: talk about it**

families, are implicated: husband-wife and parent-child relationships. In both relational sites, mothers are offered the *subject position of custodian*, which is congruent with the labour that is conventionally expected of women as sexual partners of men and/or as mothers. First, custodianship mobilizes (again) discourses about femininity in which women perform the emotionally nurturing work in relationships, caring for their male partners and their children, e.g. expressing love, talking about feelings, confronting psychological issues, etc. (Frith & Kitzinger, 1998; Hollway, 1984a, 1984b; Wilbraham, 1996b, 1997). Second, custodianship mobilizes (again) discourses about sexual health in which women take responsibility for reproduction, contraception and negotiating monogamy or safer sex practices – and effectively ‘talking about sex’, even when this is regarded as taboo or sensitive/difficult (Wilbraham, 1999a).

Re-recruitment into the custodial subject position in Text 1 pivots on revealing to mothers a ‘twist’ in these traditionally recycled stories of women’s labour; and new, seemingly modern, liberated and progressive inscription of responsibilities. These twists reinterpret normal problematic realities, positioning mothers as *agents of change*. They appear first as the alleged mono-causal link between talking-about-sex and pre-empting risks, crises and damages that haunt familial relationships; and second, that mothers need to become sexually liberated and enlightened themselves (cf. Foucault, 1978). Recruitment would require mothers to work on themselves *mentally* and *emotionally*, ‘to accept sex as a normal, healthy part of life’ – and it is also ‘fun’. They should also change their *behaviour*: ‘talk about sex openly and frankly’ in order to protect their children, partners, relationships, families *and* themselves from the damages wrought by

too-early sexual activity, teenage pregnancy, promiscuity, sexually transmitted infections, divorce, domestic abuse or sexual violence. This places mothers as pivotal relay points in the government of social problems (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989); and draws in 'diffused innovation' models of behaviour change, where through powerfully inscribing maternal subjectivities, mothers are well positioned in families/homes to influence others interpersonally in particular ways (Naidoo & Wills, 2000).

The parent-child axis is the focus of this thesis, but as I will show later on, aspects of the parental sexual relationship are figured in the socialization of daughters, and in the 'register' of communication between adult sexual partners. With respect to mothers' custodial responsibility to talk about sex with children: there is no choice. The psychologized discursive injunction to talk-about-it is inscribed as a condition of modern parenting: 'it's never too soon to start', and if mothers have not started yet, 'it's never too late to start'.

The horizons of this sex discussion do not appear clearly in Text 1 – they are to be revealed in serial installments of this regular *Lovelines* column (see Chapter 7) - but we could assume some congruency with the prevailing liberal-therapeutic discourse about sexuality instruction that circulates through psychological, medical, sexological and health promotion institutions, i.e. sex is about individuals' informed and responsible choices, and individual rights healthy bodily pleasure and emotional well being (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998; see Chapter 3). In Text 1, mothers are recruited 'to educate [children] about their sexuality and the pleasure of sex with a loving partner', and 'to help [children] make informed choices'. The subject positioning of mothers as *educators about sex* with access to accurate information – as well as *open and frank talkers about sex and sexual issues* – sets up a crisis of authority.

### The normal-problematical mother

Ironically, if talking about sex in a particular way is the mark of ideal positioning as a custodian and agent of change, then failure, talking in another way, or not talking at all,

is marked 'normal-but-problematical'. The crisis of authority for mothers is constituted as their 'normality', or in other words: *most* mothers are incompetent sex-communicators, and so fail to be good-mothers, and they need assistance from experts. Feminist critics have commented on the role of women's magazines in the recruitment of women as malleable subjects: gendered subject positions address women's imperfections and inadequacies, and prescribe a lifetime of striving to improve themselves, disguise their flaws and mend their relationship-mistakes (Coward, 1984). Rose (1998) refers to the 'therapies of the normal', the pedagogies of self-fulfillment disseminated through the mass media, which the translate enigmatic desires, disappointments and frustrations of everyday life into 'precise ways of inspecting and working on oneself in order to realize one's potential, gain happiness and exercise one's autonomy' (p. 17).

The norm in Text 1 – implicating 'most of us', as *Fairlady* readers, as women - is constituted as not-talking comfortably about sex, viz. 'most of us would rather die than talk about our sex life', and 'frank, open discussion of sex as a natural, healthy, fun part of life is not on'. The figure of *the normal problematical mother* is made to appear sexually repressed as follows, offering readers a range of subject positions – entry points of identification - from which the text might make sense within their own experience:

- She is *sexually active*, evidenced by 'bedroom antics', a 'sex life' and 'sexual fantasies'; BUT...
- She *does not talk* about sex 'comfortably', 'openly' or 'frankly';
- She *lacks information*: being unfamiliar with 'everything there is to know about sex', sexual norms and risks, and the new sex education and parenting knowledges, that are currency in a modern world;
- She is *misinformed*: believing popular myths like 'openness about sex leads to promiscuity';
- She has *conservative attitudes* towards or *unresolved issues* about sex: a 'tightlipped attitude', embarrassment, not accepting 'sex as a natural, healthy, fun part of life';

- She is a *product of repressive sexual socialization*: authoritarian and 'old fashioned' parents who talked about sex 'in a perfunctory and embarrassed way'.

A reflexive space is set up between the normal-problematical mother subject position and the ideal custodial-mother subject position, and this anxious gap opens an opportunity for intervention by experts. Mothers are thus inscribed with guilt and shame through exposure of their bad mothering to themselves through the shifting perspective of the text (Mills, 1994), as they inevitably transgress ideals (see Chapter 8). Thus, *Fairlady* and *loveLife* pledge to - through the *Lovelines* series - remedy mothers' knowledge deficits with magic bullets of information, and practical communication skills, with which to 'help [mothers] talk about sex more easily in [her] family.' The transformation promise is to replace 'difficult' communication with 'easier' communication. This is not to suggest a situation of passivity or dependence on experts; reformatory intervention is intended only to equip mothers with tools and powers with which they must take control and assume responsibility for their families (Rose, 1990). The text concludes with this imperative of active and autonomous labour in the privacy of homes: 'The rest will be up to you.'

### 3. POSITIONING EXPERTS

#### Authority over the conduct of conduct

As I have argued in Chapter 1, mass mediated health communication texts – as a genre of prescriptively encoded information intended to produce behaviour change – are set up to thwart polysemy and counter readings 'against the grain'. They labour to fix meanings in particular ways, to reassert ideals that have (inevitably) been transgressed, to produce desired subjective, and public health, effects. This is not to say that *one* meaning/position is established; but that subjective change, skewed in a preferred, positive direction, should be effected. With respect to the *Lovelines* series, the deployment of the power of expertise – in the guise of a scientific and objective approach

– lends persuasive force to the imperative for mothers to refold themselves in order to accomplish responsible custodianship.

The *Lovelines* series, as health promotional material produced by *loveLife* and embedded within *Fairlady*, draws legitimacy from 'branding' or 'signature'. Branding, an advertising term, reinforces consumers' orientation towards products over time, allowing target audiences to identify with aspirations, values and beliefs associated with particular lifestyles (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1992). The signature of a mediated text assures authentic authorship, and authority, based on forms of address and the 'relationship' previously established between texts and audiences of subjects (Kamuf, 1988). With respect to women's magazines, audience-reception research suggests that readers 'trust' the gossipy intimacy of the genre (i.e. form), and the objectivity of the information that is offered (i.e. content), even though material is read in various ways, and used or not (Hermes, 1995; Leman, 1980).

Trust might not be unequivocally bestowed on *loveLife*-branded material. *loveLife*'s media campaigns targeting youth have generated public resistances from parents, Aids-activists and researchers in South Africa, for various reasons (see Chapters 4, 7 & 8; also Coulson, 2002; Makgetla, 2005; W. Parker, 2003; Posel, 2004; Singer, 2005). Whether or not readers recognize the *loveLife* signature in the footer of Text 1 – and all *Lovelines* texts that follow - its authority is nested within the more benign-seeming, trusting *Fairlady* text-audience relationship. This might serve to defuse any inflammatory moments of parental resistance towards messaging.

*Fairlady* as a media text-production institution allocates – or constantly defers - its authority to other forms and sites of expertise, or draws in/on experts on health communication to transform risky behaviour in the context of HIV/Aids. This kind of calculated allocation of authority to others – and the rhizomatic way in which it develops, by a capillary of networks, splicing subjectivity to expertise - is what Foucault understands as 'the conduct of conduct'; and is a key feature of governmentality. Following this line of thought, Rose (1998) sets out several conditions of expertise. First,



claims of authority should be grounded in scientific and objective research findings. Second, authority claims should be aligned with, and legitimated by, broader political argument, binding knowledge to the efficacious government of good-health. Third, the claims to scientificity and efficiency 'bind subjectivity to truth, and subjects to experts' (p. 156).

With this Foucauldian lens in place, and focusing specifically on the operation of authority, and panoptic surveillance over mothers and teenagers in the *Lovelines* series and the family cell, several interrelated tactics appear. I will examine four deployments here: (a) taken-for-granted and incontestable 'truths' about sex and sexuality; (b) referrals-out to other sources of expertise, beyond the margins of texts; (c) research statistics as scare tactics; and (d) mono-causal narratives and binary choices for action. These tactics of government by expertise will reappear through the chapters that follow.

Firstly, deployment of truths about sex and sexuality. Text 1 draws implicitly on prevailing institutionalized knowledges and discursive practices; and these appear as a 'world-view' or ontology that is ideologically taken-for-granted (Parker, 1992), and therefore, not requiring empirical research evidence to prove, as would a risky behaviour 'norm', see below. For example, *psychological discourses* establish the 'truths' about the human mind, feelings and behaviour, e.g. the place of sex and sexuality in identity or daily life, what 'teenagers' are really like, the psychotherapeutic value of talking about problems, communication rules, sex, etc. *Bio-medical discourses* invent 'the human body' in a biological way through knowledges about anatomy, 'basic instincts', immune systems, infectious diseases, risk-prevention, reproduction, contraceptive technology, etc. See more on discourses about sex in Chapter 7.

The operation of such discourses in Text 1 serve to regulate (a) *what* may be known about sex (knowledge), and (b) *who* may know it. Following Foucault's coupling of knowledge and power, relational subject positions are established that set up two planes of knowing and unknowing. First, in text-audience frame: 'the one who knows' is the expert-text and advice-giver, and 'the one who wants/needs to know' is the

*Lovelines/Fairlady* reader and advice-seeking mother. Second, in mother-child frame (in the family cell): the mother is 'the one who knows', with the child as 'the one who wants/needs to know'. In Text 1, the knower wants to *help* the un-knower, and the un-knower must be inscribed with her need for this help. The text-audience relationship thus pivots on a skewed and shifting power balance of authority, which makes offered subject positions for readers hard to resist – because mothers *need* expertise to (re)establish authority over children in the family cell.

**Signposting the information highway: *this* way, please!**

Secondly, deployment of referrals-out to other forms or sites of expertise. This tactic, which defers authority to other texts beyond the borders of a single *Lovelines* text, appears, on the surface, to contradict the implied certainty of sexual knowledges and who knows about them through figuring doubt. Text 1, for example, routinely exposes gaps of doubtfulness in the readers' knowledge – readers are subject to (problematical) 'myths' or 'old-fashioned ideas' about sex.

But Text 1 also reproduces gaps in the knowledges it reveals, through its inter-textuality. Thus, the episodic-series format scaffolds anticipation of further texts, as bi-monthly installments of sex-talking 'truth' appear – the reader will have to wait for knowledge to be conferred, which is not at their immediate convenience. To cover this doubtful gap, and to further impel an active/docile modern sexual subject, signposts to 'more information' – available *elsewhere* via *loveLife* websites, further print supplements, *Parentline* toll-free helplines (with telephone numbers), supportive specialist organizations or services, email or postal addresses that can be written to – are laid out. The will to discourse is fabricated as not only producing a mother who speaks sex with anyone and everyone; but also impels her to consume proliferating 'advice' on sex as a 'sensitive topic', to augment her inadequate or inappropriate knowledge and experience.

This is understood as a feature of the post-modern 'information highway' invented through inter-textual mediated forms and sites – an endlessly unfolding and flowing

universe of truths/texts that can never be totally escaped or fully captured (Giddens, 1991), and which are driven by matrices of pervasive risk-exposure (Beck, 1992). The decline of grand narratives has produced radical doubt about knowledge, and suspicion of competitive and rival truth claims, particularly regarding something as apparently 'important' as sex and sexuality is. However, the *Lovelines* series short-circuits such confusion – and closes down the potential for resistance when knowledge claims contradict one another – through solipsistic referrals to *loveLife*'s own website, print supplements, affiliated organizations, other mediated initiatives by *loveLife*, and to its own (in-house) research findings (see Text 1, and below; see also Chapter 4).

This might be understood as branding or signature pay offs, where *loveLife* material within *Fairlady* functions as a 'promotion' or 'advertorial' for *loveLife* products, as pieces of so-called 'objective information' about sexuality. This tactic masquerades then as access to wider, deeper and truer information gathering as constitutive of the modern sexual subject, but closes meaning through constant reassertion of *loveLife*'s 'brand' of sexual knowledge and ideological spin. It also reproduces the competitive impression that *loveLife* is the *only* health communication media agency that is involved with campaigning and programming in the HIV/Aids field; and provides the *only* solution to the urgent matter of risk-prevention (W. Parker, 2003, 2005b).

### Very scary tactics indeed

Thirdly, deployment of research statistics as 'scare tactics'. Statistics form a significant authority claim in the *Lovelines* series – as 'quantification rhetoric' (cf. Potter, Wetherell & Chitty, 1991) – and it noteworthy that the *same* studies, norms and numbers are rehearsed repeatedly through the 17-text series to facilitate recall; most notably rates of unwanted teenage pregnancy, young ages of sexual activation and youth risk of HIV-infection (cf. Simanski, 1998). As in Text 1, statistics are vaguely cited as emitting, as undated (timeless) truths, from creditable research institutions, e.g. *Medical Research Council*, or they pop up as mysterious 'facts' or 'numbers' without citation, possibly relying on the *loveLife/Fairlady* signature for authority. This reading of vagueness and

mystery is, of course, refracted through my own reading-position as an university academic, where citation of sources operates as a rigorous form of regulated positioning of claims-making; and it also means that academic readers or public health activists are empowered to 'check' sources they may be interested in or suspicious of. Discourse analysis of argumentation in published research studies has also demonstrated how selection of particular studies to review – and which variables in those studies are unpicked – is deployed to support particular ideological positions, and epistemological aims (Potter & Mulkay, 1985).

As I suggested in previous chapters, my analytical position leans towards the representational practices deployed through particular statistics to persuade a particular audience of (mostly) white, middle classed mothers – as *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers. Such tactics of persuasion are seen to operate whether or not the actual statistics can be 'proven' – through access to rival research evidences – to be fallacious or *misrepresentational* without caveats. W. Parker (2003, 2005b) has challenged the truthfulness and power of such 'crisis-mongering' (see Chapter 4), and while I draw in his concerns, I follow Rose's (1990) argument above in trying to bind such scientific representations to regulation of maternal subjectivities. In other words, how do such 'truth traces' (as inter-texts) operate to perpetuate a particular worldview about HIV/Aids, and how this works to govern positioning of subjects. Risk, and its aftermath of spectacular failures, is thus deployed as a 'calculated rationality for action' (Castel, 1991).

Consider some of the research evidence and causative correlations that appear in the following (scantly cited) statements from Text 1:

1. '[There's] overwhelming evidence that South Africans of all walks of life are becoming more sexually promiscuous'.
2. Sex education in Holland and France starts at age 5-6 years; this produces delayed onset of sexual activity and lower teenage pregnancy rates than in 'prudish Britain' or the United States. In the USA, 4 in 10 girls fall pregnant before the age of 20.

3. South African children are sexually experimental and/or active 'from as young as 10... even before they start menstruating'. This results in 'one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world', where 'one in three teenage girls will be pregnant before the age of 20', and 'national statistics attribute between 40 and 50 percent of all live births to teenagers' (*Medical Research Council*, no date).
4. 'Among adults, our tight-lipped attitude towards sexual issues has contributed to higher rates of divorce, sexual violence and domestic abuse, and greater prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as chlamydia and gonorrhea, *experts believe*.'
5. '30 % of urban adults in South Africa have a STD, which renders them 20 times more likely to be HIV-infected'.
6. 'Contrary to popular belief, openness [in talking] about sex does not lead to greater promiscuity' (*Judi Nwokedi, loveLife*).

Much of this empirical territory was covered in Chapter 4, but I briefly reiterate the evidential bases for these claims. The statistics reflected in *Lovelines* were recycled by the contracted materials developer from a 'resource package' of several *loveLife* print supplements and press releases, as part of the parent-targeted campaign: *Love them enough to talk about sex* (e.g. *loveLife*, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). Within a text-production chain, the problem with this recycling of 'other' materials, for different, narrower audiences of parental subjects, is precisely that the particular parameters of risk/experience for white, middle classed, motherly *Fairlady*-readers are un/wittingly mismatched and misjudged. Thus, the statistics may not be 'wrong', but are cited without their conditions/contexts of manufacture.

Statement 1 is empirically baseless, and unknowable, beyond the moral import of the word 'promiscuity' (see below). Statements 2 and 6 – regarding parental communication with children about sex as risk-inoculation – are drawn from the *WHO*-commissioned systematic review of literature on 'sex education' that focused mainly on findings from developed countries (Grunseit et al., 1997). Statement 3 ignores the highly contextually contingent, and classed norms of sex induction in South Africa – median age 15-17 years

(Harrison, 2005; Hartell, 2005; Kelly et al., 2001) – and opts for sensationalized, unsubstantiated reportage of ‘sex at 10 years’ by barely-pubescent girls. Statement 3 also powerfully asserts antenatal data on prevalence of teenage pregnancies as an epidemic generalizable to a national population – when such data is based on raced-black and classed-poor young women who attend primary health care clinics. W. Parker’s (2003) rigorous sleuthing could not trace the statistic in Statement 3 – allegedly from the *Medical Research Council* – of live births in South Africa attributable to ‘teenage-mothers’. Statements 4 and 5 relied (again) on antenatal data on HIV-prevalence, and statistical covariance of HIV, syphilis and pregnancy; but (again) these data are fenced into gendered-female, classed-poor and raced-black limits. The mono-causal connection between ‘tight-lipped attitudes to sex’ and South African domestic detritus of the nuclear-family-in-crisis – divorce, intimate violence, rape, sexual abuse of children – would need brave experts to defend. It is unclear which ‘experts’ are referred to in Statement 4.

Clearly, such research statements constitute *all* ‘teenagers’ in risk-vulnerable ways. The construction of a gendered *girl-victim subject position* is the position in relation to which the custodial-mother as protector, educator, informer, talker and transformer must function. I return to the positioning of youth later. Text 1 establishes the *loveLife* position from which it speaks – its branded signature, its authorial voice – as follows: ‘to accept sex as a normal, healthy part of life... and then to talk about it.’ Paradoxically then, the representational practices inherent in the above research statements produce several contradictory, ‘scary effects’ for the mostly raced-white, middle classed audience of *Lovelines/Fairlady*.

Usdin (1998) has argued that messaging deploying scare tactics – for example, representing HIV/Aids as a fatal, unstoppable catastrophe, and risk as universal and pervasive – produces mixed and unpredictable audience-responses. Thus, while scare tactics attract (voyeuristic) attention, they also produce helplessness and hysteria, denial and distancing of risk, and further stigma and discrimination towards those living with HIV/Aids.

I consider these ambiguous effects on anxious middle classed mothers – in terms of either (a) inclusion of herself, her sexual partner and her children, in pervasive risk-categories and risk-reductive actions as the *'everyone's at risk' position*, or (b) entrenching her implacably classed distance from risk as the *'risk is the Other' position* (cf. Patton, 1996).

Firstly, scare tactics achieve an emotive and panicky tone through emphasis of unbridled risk factors associated with penetrative, unprotected, reproductive heterosexual sex; and tired resignation about how difficult it is to transform rank ignorance, conservatism and resistance. This 'dangerous' sexualization operates through casting allegedly 'sexually experimental' and 'sexually active *children*' (not yet sexy adolescents) into spiraling cycles of uncontrollable sexual excess, repressive silence and sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/Aids); *and* family dysfunction.

This hails readers through their (voyeuristic) horror at such perversion of childish innocence, as a kind of 'Aids-panic' (Squire, 1997). It inscribes the direness of pervasive risk-saturation, and so the urgency of remedial and/or preventive action as moral prophylaxis. The ambiguous meanings of words like 'promiscuous' and 'promiscuity' in Text 1 quickly congeal into panic about depravity and unraveling values; judgement of those who have (or have had) multiple partners; and anxiety about 'how many' (partners) constitutes 'promiscuity'. It is noteworthy that safer sex technologies (e.g. condom use, non-penetrative sexual options) are not figured in Text 1. There is *'only [one] way to change this [and] this is to become more open about sex to your friends, partners and children'* (my emphases). The talking cure, evidently.

Secondly, as scary as tactics can be (above), there is respite in the cool-headedness of science (Patton, 1996). Thus, the research statements in Text 1 appear as 'neutral' – that is, reproducing no interests or ideology – due to their representation as evidence, as facts or as quotes from un/named experts. They appear as decontextualized descriptions of norms 'out there' (somewhere), severed from the daily realities of mostly white middle classed, motherly readers. In other words, there is disparity between evidence

represented and health beliefs of *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers; who might thus fail to be persuaded to adopt an 'everyone's at risk' position. The research statements are also severed from the conditions of their manufacture through always already flawed research methodologies (cf. Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995). Thus, they function as scientific traces in Text 1, operating to 'other' risk, to keep it at a distance; and pivot on the idea that while *some* people may be out of control, science is *in control* (Patton, 1996). Readers do not require contextual detail or depth as long as they can (emotively) maintain a sense of their own safety from risk (Patton, 1996). They are hailed by their powerfulness to ward off risk, and to keep their own family protected – possibly through classed privileges relating to custodial monitoring and safer sex-normative neighbourhoods, rather than by individualized conversations about sex (cf. Kelly et al., 2001).

#### **Mono-causal narratives, national stereotypy, and Hobson's choice**

Fourthly, the deployment of mono-causal scientific narratives. The representational practices inherent in Text 1's research statements (above) offer scientific narrativizations that connect up actions with consequences, producing cause-and-effect relationships that are calculable and predictable. Such linear linkages between 'variables' are evident in colloquial conjunctive words such as 'contributes to' or 'leads to'. These words translate into scientific research discourse as associative or correlative relationships between variables ('contributes to'), or causation ('leads to') (Tredoux, 1999). Specialist audiences might grasp caveats regarding knowledge-production, but they are unlikely to be respected by lay audiences (e.g. *Lovelines* readers), who anticipate unequivocal scientific truths that operate via causality.

The most significant interpellation among these truth-narratives in Text 1 is that (X) open-minded talk about sex and sexuality with parents, from early childhood, *CAUSES* (Y) sex behavioural outcomes later on, such as delayed sexual induction, informed choices about sexual health, condom use, and fewer sexual partners, teenage pregnancies and HIV-infections.



As I have suggested above, such truthful effects are not sucked from thumbs or from socio-political vacuums. However, the mono-causal narrative in Text 1 eclipses any kind of amelioration through social, economic, cultural, gendered or familial contexts of such conversations about sex. This effectively positions mothers as solely responsible, through talking to individual children about sex in particular ways, for thwarting wide scale social and public health problems. Along these lines, Kelly et al., (2001) have critically unpacked American findings that teenagers who talked to their mothers about condoms before their first sex encounter are three times more likely to use condoms consistently than those who did not talk with their mothers. They argue that the motherly discussion might not be *the* variable that *caused* the condom-use; but that dialogue *and* condom-use were more likely to be embedded in wider mediating environments, like socio-economic class, normative peer influence or the un/resourced context in which the family lives (see Chapter 4).

'Contexts' do appear in Text 1 – as the discrepant national psyches and parenting cultures of France, Holland, Britain, United States of America and South Africa - but in ways that serve to reproduce mono-causal narratives. The particularizing, historicized deployments of sexuality in families in each of these heterogeneous sites, is ignored in favour of generalization (cf. Schalet, 2000). South Africa is figured as 'tightlipped about sex', alongside 'prudish Britain'; it is unclear whether this refers to South Africa's colonial inheritance of sexual prudishness from British settlers and missionaries, or (raced) 'cultural taboo' on sex-talk.

Such mono-causal narratives in the contexts of national stereotypy produce several effects. First, assertion of grand-scale international comparison excises or displaces uneasy engagement with South Africa as an ex-colonized, *developing* context, still struggling to emerge from the aftermath of apartheid; an aspirant neo-liberal context lacerated by historicized classed and raced disparities of resources, access, choice and voice. Unintended teenage pregnancy in Britain might be classed (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), for example, but not in the *particular* ways of acculturated under-development in rural areas; including injectable hormonal contraception, lack of access to health

resources, non-dialogical approach to unprotected sex, early sex activation and coercion, poverty and HIV/Aids (e.g. Kelly & Ntlabati, 2002). The sexual, communicative and familial arrangements in the advanced liberal democracies of Holland and France – with their ‘First World’ health and welfare institutions – would appear as incongruous ideals for many poorer South Africans to emulate; but possibly not so for white, middle classed *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers. The excision of local resource-poor contexts thus reinforces the subjective (colonial) government of white, middle classed mothers by dominant discourses of HIV/Aids risk, and developmental psychologies.

Second, these national-sexual-psyche narratives obscure any ambivalence around scientific empirical research practice – how exactly was research on ‘prudish Britain’ (statement 2) or ‘promiscuous South Africans’ (statement 1) conducted? This operates in Text 1 to tie ‘obvious’ truth effects directly to subjection. Naïve causal rhetoric reduces points of identification and available subject positions to a binary opposition: terms that appear simply as positive or negative, good or bad, righteous or wrong, healthy or risky. Hence, (a) liberal-Holland (ideal position, central term) comes to stand against (b) prudish-Britain (transgressor position, marginalized term). The narrativized consequences alluded to above are then bound to these binary positions: positive effects are attached to (a), impelling the uptake of this liberated subject position; and negative effects attached to (b), as transgression, disavowing prudishness and silence through elaboration of inevitable risks and damages. Research statistics might serve either term; but their deployment in Text 1 as scare tactics is understood to police transgression, and to impel choice and conduct in a particular direction through anxiety, fear and panic.

### Carrot and stick rhetoric

It is worth revisiting briefly the apparent paradox in Text 1 between the *loveLife* motto – sex is normal, healthy and fun: talk about it - and research findings as scare tactics. The deployment of mono-causal narratives and binary choices is understood as a strategy of persuasion in a health educative genre of mass media communication. Text 1’s prerogative is to inscribe the need for a prescriptive shift of subjection from ‘unhealthy’

practices, as '*what-is*' and '*the normal-problematical position*', towards risk-reduction, as '*what-should-be*' and '*the risk-safety position*'. This scaffolding of persuasion operates via 'the stick' and 'the carrot' argumentation. Scare tactics as the stick, under cover of scientific legitimacy and statistical generalization, threaten recalcitrant mothers with the destruction of their families through divorce, intimate violence, sexual dysfunction, sexually abused and/or promiscuous children, and pregnant and HIV+ daughters. It appears that once mothers have been conscientized about their normal-problematical position, and they *remain* repressed and uncommunicative about sex, they may then be seen to occupy '*extreme transgressor*', '*ill-advised*' or (plainly) '*stupid*' positions. The carrot appears as 'the pleasure of sex with a loving partner', for mothers and for her developing children.

Thus, the *loveLife* motto does *not* unbutton sex to let protected pleasures hang out all over the place. Instead, normal, healthy fun comes with many discursive strings of alliance – rather than condoms - attached. A hierarchy of different kinds of sex appears in Text 1, with different contexts for the use or abuse of sex and positions that are differentially available to mothers and her pubertal charges. *LoveLife* is clearly aligned with a (regulated) sex-positive position, which appears to pivot on *partner selection* to stay HIV-free – choosing a risk-free to have unprotected sex with, in the context of love and open communication; rather than routine condom-use as a non-negotiable risk-reductive tactic per se (Patton, 1996). This is drawn against censured stupid-sex choices in Text 1, as follows:

- A *sex-positive position* is figured through the maturity of 'the pleasure of sex with a loving partner' (one carefully selected, HIV-free partner), and from which all goodness may follow, e.g. open and frank communication, responsibility, informed choices, health, safety from sexually transmitted diseases, bedroom antics, fun, etc.; and
- *Stupid-sex* is figured either as 'promiscuous sex' (sex with too-many partners), or as 'too-soon sex' (sex with physically immature children or emotionally

immature teenagers), and both these categories of unwise action are bound to deleterious consequences, e.g. unwanted pregnancy, chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV/Aids, not to mention lifelong-scarred psyches.

The absence of a responsible safe-sex position – in either sex-positive or stupid-sex constructions – is marked here. Such stupid-sex rhetoric – rooted in the cognitive scientific discourse of KAPB/KAP surveys, reiterated and recycled through expert-rhetoric of ‘informed choices’ (see Chapter 4) – works here to ward off subject positions or sex practices that challenge conventional feminine subject positioning for women, viz. the place of sex within intimate relations, the merging of sex with love. Resistance by women and girls as readers of *Lovelines* is thus both difficult and easy to theorize. *Difficult*, in the sense of the closure of meanings of sex in Text 1, and the mono-causal binding of dire consequences to sexual risk-taking, unwise choices or inadequate mothering. No safer options appear. ‘Promiscuity’ – whatever this means – might be transfigured through condom-use between consenting partners as a desirable/preferred conduct. Such subversion would be difficult for readers to achieve, for the lurking bad-mother subject position is both pejorative and punishable through legal apparatus that judges parenting conduct and protects children’s rights. My analysis has shown how truth-effects are bound to the custodial subject position inscribed on mothers, as are her rights to appeal for institutionalized support if she cannot cope, or when things go wrong.

Thus, resistance, recalcitrance and transgression are also always already rendered *easy* to imagine. Mothers must be repeatedly, endlessly recruited through mediated health education texts – for regulation tactics never totally succeed or fail (Foucault, 1978).

#### 4. DISCIPLINING ADOLESCENTS

Text 1 above established the anxious territory of youth sexuality in stark images of pre-pubescent sexual experimentation, early sex initiation, and the consequent risks – for girls particularly – of unwanted teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Anxiety also pervaded interrogation of mothers' knowledge - in the form of accurate, up-to-date 'facts' - about sex, sexuality, HIV/Aids and risk-prevention; and that they might, inadvertently, be *exaggerating* risk to vulnerable teenagers through misguided following old-fashioned myths, e.g. talking openly with children about sex produces precocious sexual activation through curiosity. TEXT 2 (overleaf) picks up these issues in ways that position 'teenagers' in particular ways, namely situating them, according to prevailing storm-and-stress models of adolescence, as poised between sexual 'innocence' and 'experience', and subject to misleading influences and risks that parents (mothers) are called on to ward off or ameliorate.

### **Innocence and safety, storm-and-stress**

Text 2 sets up two truths that acknowledge, normalize, and to some extent, fabricate mothers' experience through anticipation. First, communication about sex and sexuality is construed as difficult, for various reasons ranging from socialized inhibitions to sensitive topics. Second, teenagers are figured as difficult – evidenced in 'the difficult teenage years'. The easier way through the difficulty, as ever supported through (unspecified) 'substantial international evidence', with mother positioned as 'guide' and 'talker' (cf. custodian subject position), is presented as the achievement of risk, sex and sexuality awareness *before* the storm of hormones hits, *before* rebelliousness alters a child's power relationship with custodians, *before* sex is practiced, in order to prevent and thwart inevitable risk. The anxiety of this for mothers is that Text 2 exposes the leaky boundaries of puberty; that an (innocent) '8-year old child' may be sexually and reproductively mature – evidenced by menstruation, bodily changes and 'newly aroused sexual feelings' – but this child is emotionally and cognitively incapable (as yet) of dealing with the consequent risks of penetrative-genital sex. Knowing and managing the risks of sex responsibly are thus constituted as requirements for adult subjectivity, or fully adult sexual citizenship (Evans 1993; Patton, 1996).

Chapters 3 and 4 reviewed several constructions of parental discomfort in talking with their children about sex. Text 2 explores, to some extent, parental reticence in talking

## TEXT 2

Lovelines 10: *Fairlady*, 16 August 2000, p. 102.

### When puberty comes early

Most parents blanch when their children first ask about sex. What is expected from children at each age changes with every generation, and it can be a race for parents to catch up, let alone stay ahead of what they need to know. There's substantial evidence internationally to support the fact that talking to your children from an early age about sex and sexual behaviour is a fundamental influence in delayed sexual activity, and more responsible sexual behaviour, among teenagers.

These changes are not merely as a result of emotional and social pressures. Studies show that today's children mature faster emotionally and physically. A 1997 study of 17 000 American children by Dr Marcia Herman-Giddens concluded that the age of puberty has dropped dramatically, with some girls as young as eight or nine experiencing their first menstrual period. The reason for this has been hotly debated, and the most likely contenders are hormone-enriched food and better nutrition leading to a higher percentage of body fat (and therefore higher oestrogen levels at a younger age). Both factors may play a part. The South African situation has not been documented, but anecdotal evidence among parents suggests that both the physical and behavioural signs of puberty are appearing at increasingly younger ages.

What's to be done? Emotionally, an eight-year-old is far less able to deal with newly aroused sexual feelings and bodily changes than a 13-year-old. Taboos about discussing sex with children are reinforced when parents are faced with questions from a child rather than a teenager. A combination of information and communication may help parents and children make better sense of unexpected signs of adulthood when toddlerhood seems but recently left behind.

It's never too early to start talking to your child about difficult issues like sex, drug abuse and violence. Open communication gives you the chance to guide your child through the difficult teenage years. Avoid messages that imply sexual development, sex and sexuality are somehow shameful. But your children also need to be aware of the risks. Some girls may need to receive formal or informal training on being assertive, since early sexual development makes them more likely to fall prey to sexual abuse from older teens and adults.

It's worth remembering that puberty, at whatever age, doesn't mean that sexual activity is necessarily imminent. As ever, children need to be told about the emotional implications of sexual interaction as much as the physical mechanics. With this in mind, *loveLife* recently launched a publication, *Talking and listening: Parents and teenagers together*, which includes material to help teenagers, their parents and other caregivers to talk and work through difficult issues. Topics include danger of HIV infection, unwanted pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, violence and abuse, and so on (for free copies, write to the address below).

For more info, check out the website [www.scamto.lovelife.org.za](http://www.scamto.lovelife.org.za), email [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za), phone (011) 327-7379, fax (011) 327-6863 or write to Lovelines, Box 45, Parklands 2121.

**loveLife: talk about it.**

with pre-pubescent children along psychoanalytic lines, viz. the recycling of a neurotic (or nostalgic) invention of innocence to defend against and disavow children's sexual knowledge or feelings. This construction operates along these lines: to speak about sexuality evidences sex, names it, and inscribes it on hitherto 'innocent', or certainly liminal, bodies (Patton, 1996). This inscription refers, of course, to the bodies of 'children' whose hitherto sexual feelings or experimentation are (innocently) not known as sex; and also refers to the unexpected appearance of parents, to these children, as sexual beings. Parents are positioned as voyeurs – or in (politer) Foucauldian terms, as custodians or sentries in the panoptic watchtower of surveillance – overseeing the normative yet uneasy passage of children from immature innocence (virginal bodies) to sexual knowingness (wary/wily bodies), and later, to sexual experience (pleasureable bodies). The onset of puberty 'sexualizes' bodies, marks them as 'sexed', 'sexual' and 'sexy', and even if 'sexual activity is not necessarily imminent', talking about it implies sex; the pubertal body is poised and waiting for (or anticipating) heterosexual reproductive sex (cf. Lee, 2003; Lupton & Tulloch, 1998).

Whether talking (uncomfortably) with *children* who are 'early sexual developers', or with sexually charged *teenagers*, the reminder in Text 2 that 'puberty, at whatever age, does not mean that sexual activity is necessarily imminent' appears incongruous. Mothers have already been inscribed with statistics of sexual activity before menstruation begins (Text 1), and that 8 or 9 year old girls are confused by 'newly aroused sexual feelings and bodily changes' (Text 2). The centrality of the sign of sex within a hormonally induced puberty – and therefore natural, healthy, biologically normal, etcetera – has already been called up. Puberty in Text 2 powerfully figures the sexually or reproductively ready-body coupled with emotional and cognitive immaturity – along the lines of prevailing storm-and-stress models of adolescence (see Chapter 1) – which is vulnerable to risks of sexual abuse, sexual coercion, unwanted pregnancy and HIV-infection.

Here, a *stormy-and-stressed subject position for teenagers* permits the further invention of 'the difficult teenage years' as risky along psychological lines: as sexually charged and

confused; as moody and emotionally unstable; as rebellious towards parental authority and as easily lead astray by others. Young people are also assumed to be ignorant of - unknowing, non-rational and/or unreflexive towards - the risks of sexualized interaction with other young people. Thus, 'difficult' also refers to the positioning of youth as hard to reach; as difficult to manage and control; and as dangerous in their recalcitrance towards advice from adults - custodians or authority figures - particularly when risks to emotional and physical health are high (Wyn & White, 1997).

Mothers are impelled in Text 2 to defend against the hyper-sexualized and hyper-risked pubertal-reproductive capacity - of the storm-and-stressed subject position - through recourse to telling children 'about the *emotional implications of sexual interaction* as much as the physical mechanics' (my emphasis). This refers to the relational, psychological and communicative dynamics in which sex is traditionally embedded, as deployment of sex through alliance, and by which its practice is policed (cf. Foucault, 1978). It works here to underscore an assumption of young people's un-readiness for (adult) sex; possibly on grounds of conjugalization of sex in terms of economic and emotional containment of 'consequences' (Macleod, 2003). Further, it implies that unqualified 'physical mechanics' would confer permission for unwise, too-soon sexual activity, which must be warded off. In this way, innocence (no-sex-yet) is linked to sexual knowledge - through anticipation of sex - rather than being opposed to it. I return to how youthful recalcitrance - to talk with and to listen to parents - is managed in *Lovelines* in Chapter 7.

### Addressing teenage girl-victims as baby-machines

The terms of address and representation in *Lovelines* achieve significant gendered effects in subject positioning. Both Texts 1 and 2 address readers directly as 'you', recruiting them as individual subjects; and referring to 'teenagers' as 'your children', inscribing readers' custodial power relationship over and responsibilities towards offspring. I have read this hailing - following *Fairlady's* primary target audience of women and a few stereotypically gendered clues (e.g. gossipy cappuccinos with friends, planning children's



birthday parties: Text 1) – as referring to a particular category of fairly class-privileged mothers. Similarly, when Texts 1 and 2 refer to ‘parents’ – gender-neutral term – this is read as ‘mothers’. Thus, *Lovelines* never explicitly genders its address of ‘mothers’, nor explicitly genders the communicative labour associated with talking about sex with children; but this is implied, and inscribed through the demographics and psychographics of *Fairlady*-readership (cf. Mills, 1994). I return to this gendered positioning of women in terms of constituting ‘safe containers’ in ‘unsafe families’ in which sex-talk can happen with children later.

Referring to the classed notion of *privileged* mothers, these women are figured within unspooling leisure time - for friends, cappuccinos, birthday parties, talking about sex. This category of mothers would also have financial resources to spend in/on this leisure time, both in terms of purchasing ‘luxuries’ and being able to afford waged domestic help and/or child-minding care to effect their own ‘liberation’ from the domestic cell. Such resources imply positioning in the complex, shifting racialized class divisions in (the New) South Africa, e.g. ‘professional’ white/black middle class (see Chapter 8). These resources are also implicated in the assumption of particular ‘child-centred’ parenting styles, and in the custodial supervision of children’s schooling and leisure activities on a daily basis (see Chapter 7).

Still regarding terms of address and representation, the subject positioning of teenage girls operates through an ellipsis between gender-neutral terms, such as ‘child’, ‘children’ or ‘puberty’, and the female-coded, gendered phenomena to which the ‘neutral terms’ are narratively linked, such as ‘menstruation’, ‘pregnancy’ or ‘sexual abuse’. Consider these three examples of uneasy gender-slides in Texts 1 and 2, which begin with neutral-children and end up positioning *girls* or *girl-children* as risky (emphases are mine):

- *Children* as young as 10 are experimenting with sex – and some are sexually active even before they start *menstruating*. South Africa also has the highest *teenage pregnancy* rates in the world. According to the statistics from the Medical Research Council, one in three teenage girls will be pregnant before the age of 20,

while national statistics attribute between 40 and 50 percent of all live births to teenage girls. (Text 1)

- A 1997 study of 17 000 American *children* by Dr Marcia Herman-Giddens concluded that the age of *puberty* has dropped dramatically, with some *girls* as young as eight or nine experiencing their first *menstrual period*. (Text 2)
- But your *children* need to be aware of the risks. Some *girls* may need to receive formal or informal training on being assertive, since early sexual development makes them more likely to fall prey to *sexual abuse* from older teens and adults. (Text 2)

Such gendered ellipses accomplish several things in the surveillance of girls' sexuality. First, this girlish subject position is saturated with sex. The signs of puberty are marked within a regulatory plane of sight for girls; hidden, secretive, yet carefully policed. For example, the appearance of menstrual blood is monitored monthly via supplies of sanitary protection products (Lee, 2003), access to formal expertise or informal (motherly or sisterly) advice, and in some more 'traditional' cultures/contexts in South Africa, public 'virginity testing' rituals (LeClerc-Madlala, 2001, 2002a, 2003). Similar surveillances apply to other bodily changes in a girl's post-pubertal appearance, like weight, body-shape, breast development, skin, etc. – all signifying her visibility as 'woman', and effacing 'girl', within a prevailing heterosexual male gaze (Lee, 2003).

Second, given this reproductive ripeness, this subject position is saturated with risk. Her womanliness will haplessly attract male attention, but she does not have the required (adult) assertiveness to negotiate the terms of her protection against physical and emotional abuse, sexual coercion or unsafe sex from partners. This *girl-victim subject position* stands for everything that is immature, irresponsible and dangerous about youth sexuality. The girl-victim position pivots on normative assumptions about penetrative-genital, reproductive, heterosexual sex; the risks of which are spectacularly displayed through the 'empirical proof' of unwanted pregnancy and HIV-transmission.

The *Lovelines* series returns obsessively to this girl-victim subject position; its precocious, promiscuous and unprotected sexual activity, and its capacity to breed and be infected - and to infect men and babies - as if through establishing totemic status, it will scare away or postpone teen-sex, viz. 'delay sexual activity' until it can be 'more responsible' (Text 2). But the totemic figure of the girl-victim does not banish sex; it rather serves to *hyper*-sexualize youthful subject positions. However, it is the teenage boy/man who drives sex as subject (cf. Hollway, 1984a). The girl-victim position empties teenage girls of sexual choices, decisions, desires and pleasures - however 'immature' or 'irrational' these choices made in the shifting micro-contexts of relationships are judged (by adults) to be; and sex is done *to, on or in* her by boys/men, rather than *with* her. Further, the girl-victim position invites custodians to step in and help helpless girls - to protect, police, shape and train - and also assumes girls' compliance with this seemingly benign beneficence. In Text 2, this is figured as girls' need to receive 'formal or informal training on being assertive' in order to avoid 'falling prey to sexual abuse from older teens and adults'; and later, to say no to sex and to ward off inevitable sexual attention from boys, that is inevitably (assumed to be) unwanted.

#### Boys to men: shut up and get on with it

From a feminist public health perspective, the above girl-victim subject position is reproduced, still, in the gendered ways in which power circulates, and harm tends to stick to girls and women, in heterosexual sex. She must be issued with assertive techniques to protect herself. But this figure - the girl-victim - is not the only youthful subject position that appears in the *Lovelines* series; or she cannot be so positioned in isolation. I introduce two shorter *Lovelines* excerpts here - TEXTS 3 and 4 (overleaf) - that relationally implicate girls within the subject positioning of teenage boys. My intention *is not* to recycle tired arguments about sexual differences and 'double standards' here. I adhere to the analytical intention that guides this chapter: to unpack the ways in which 'reality' - that is real-mothers, real-adolescents, real-families - is constituted in the *Lovelines* series, as risky baseline for (normal-problematical) subject

### TEXT 3

*Lovelines 15: Fairlady, 25 October 2000, p. 72.*

#### Ways to say no <excerpt>

When sex is a choice made by two consenting adults, it's a give-and-take between equals that can be exciting, meaningful and fun. But if there's an imbalance between the two partners, sex can be an unpleasant experience for at least one of them. The high rape statistics in our country concerns every woman, and no one can afford to be blasé about rape. But there are other ways that women and men are coerced into sexual activity they don't want.

To be a man is to be a sexual predator, or so society often seems to suggest to teenage boys. To prove their manhood, they should be sexually active; in fact, sexually rapacious. Young men who might not be ready to embark on sexual adventures, or who'd prefer to experience sex within the context of a romantic connection, often find themselves bullied into acting in ways that impact negatively on them and on their partners.

For the girls who are caught up in this whirlwind of sexual posturing, their identity as individuals can easily be lost in their role as conquest, a notch on a sexual belt. The pressure put on them to be sexually active takes on a variety of forms, from the threat of losing the boyfriend to more overt persuasion. Alcohol and drugs play a role in reducing young people's ability to think rationally about sexual acts in the highly charged surroundings of parties and clubs. This is not to say that teenagers are incapable of mature sexual relationships, but they're more likely to yield to pressures that older people may be better equipped to shrug off.

### TEXT 4

*Lovelines 13: Fairlady, 27 September 2000, p. 48*

#### Self-love <excerpt>

Normalizing perceptions of masturbation as a healthy sexual option is part of an effort to change sexual attitudes, particularly among adolescents. Most teenage boys will have their first orgasm through masturbation. But they will regard masturbation as furtive because, as a child, there's no way you'll talk to anybody about this – let alone your parents. What teenage boy wants to be labeled a wanker; a loser, unable to score with girls?

Dispelling the myths about masturbation is essential for cultivating a more balanced perspective on sexual expression. South African teenagers are becoming sexually active at an increasingly younger age, and we have one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world. Adolescents are at greatest risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, so masturbation is the safest form of sexual pleasure for them, especially with oral sex being questioned as a possible route of infection. Your teenager should be aware there's evidence that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted through oral sex and that semen can be introduced into the vagina manually.

In the final analysis, as the old joke goes, don't knock masturbation, it's sex with someone you love. Or at least it should be if you're doing it right. It can play an important part in helping teenagers, and

indeed adults, discover what turns them on and eventually to communicate those desires to a partner. It's natural, healthy sexual behaviour that will happen no matter what taboos we place on it. The difference is that, if we don't with word and deed imply to our children that their genitals are in some way dirty, our kids are much more likely to grow up feeling able to enjoy their sexuality, alone or with someone special.

positions. This reality will contextualize the preferred ideal 'Open Relationship' in Chapter 7, as an imperative of transformation. My intention here is to briefly highlight the elisions and confluences in the uneasy constructions of relational subject positions within (heterosexual) youth sexuality – between girls and boys - and also to explore custodial positioning of the mother in each instance. In this way, an argument regarding the privileging of the mother-daughter custodial relationship and site of governmental sex implantation is introduced.

Texts 3 and 4 operate from prevailing constructions of sex. First, through the truths of stormy-and-stressed adolescence, adolescents' 'natural' (or hormonally-driven) obsession with sex and sexuality is asserted. *Lovelines* is, of course, a health promotion series about parents, young people and sex, and it is read as such. However, this gaze marginalizes the swarms of other activities that characterize the daily lives of youth outside familial relations; and also the 'power-full' interactions between youth and their familial custodians around issues *not* related to sex, e.g. eating meals, fighting with siblings, and doing school-homework or household chores. The marginalization of this broader communicative fabric of youth experience underscores – following Foucault's thinking – the centrality of the sign of sex and sexuality in contemporary subjectivity and identity; that it is through sexuality that the 'truth' about your 'self' will be known, and adulthood cemented (Foucault, 1978). I explore how this sexual-selving is depicted to work for boys and girls below.

A second way in which prevailing constructions of sex are figured is through the appropriate 'adult shape' of responsible sex into which seemingly unruly youthful boys - *and* girls - should be fitted. Thus, 'meaningful, exciting and fun [sex]' is that sexual activity where 'choice between consenting adults' and 'give-and-take between equals' is

practiced (Text 3). The reality that is established is far from this; and Text 3 explores the dynamics of sexual coercion. Adolescent boys are positioned within the prevailing sexual imperatives of 'manhood' (adult subjectivity), namely through being 'sexually active', even 'rapacious'; a 'sexual predator' who has 'sexual adventures' (cf. MSD: Hollway, 1984a; see also the 'adult scoundrel-man', below).

There is little leeway for flexibility in this manly position; even if boys prefer a romantic spin on sex, 'they are *bullied* into acting in ways that impact negatively on them and their partner' (my emphasis). It is unclear who or what the bully is in Text 3; cultural or neighbourhood norms, other boys, a girlfriend, or a social situation such as a party? This *manly subject position* – if adopted – disavows bullied and negative effects on boys, and colonizes all and each sexual experience to inscribe and shore up his identity. There is, thus, no mention of boys' need for support, counseling, or (heaven forbid) assertiveness training. Disconcertingly, romantic objectification of girls – with both adolescent boys and girls skirting around (thwarted) 'courtly love', making explicit the discursive imperative between sex and love (Fine, 1988; Thompson, 1990; Wetherell, 1995c) – seems to be offered here as a revolutionary shift. Other (safer sex) transformational positions for youth – boys and girls – are explored in Chapter 7.

This sense of an autonomous *just-get-on-with-it teenage boy subject position* also pervades the positioning of the boy in Text 4, who 'furtively' achieves his first orgasm through masturbation. The furtiveness – without talking about it to parents, and hiding it from others lest he be positioned 'a wanker' (and so, unmanly) – means that he is able to escape surveillance, policing and regulation from parents or custodians, or public ridicule. He will, undoubtedly, hope to progress to 'real sex' as soon as possible – HIV/Aids risks notwithstanding – to achieve adult subjectivity. Text 4 demonstrates coyness, or perhaps a reconstructed psychoanalytic screen memory of childhood innocence, in the representation of masturbation. It is unclear whether boys' 'first orgasms' happen through masturbation as *pubertal adolescents*, or whether this healthy-good-normal-useful-natural-safe-etcetera activity is practiced from earlier on in childhood development – as Freudian psychoanalytic discourse, experts and parents of

young children, boys *and* girls, would promise/premise (Potgieter & Fredman, 1997; see also Chapter 3). Thus, the explicit gendering of masturbation as *boys'* sexual experimentation further cements the passivity and reticence associated with the sexualities of girls. They will wait for pleasure to be given, guided, sanctioned or postponed; and they will also be impelled to talk about their in/experience in ways that set them up for surveillance and special supervision.

The risk that saturates youth sexuality settles, again in Text 3, on girls. Risk is inscribed on her body through interaction with the 'rapacious posturing' of boys. If 'rapacious' refers to greedy and living by prey – it also slips lexically dangerously near to rape – girls appear as prey that is conquered and consumed. The word '*posturing*' – to artfully and artificially place the body in order to appear as someone else, to pretend or mask – is pivotal in this relational positioning of gendered subjects, and its transformation. The teenage boy's 'posturing' opens a hopeful gap of therapeutic opportunity between his manly performance of sexual activity and his 'real self', who might prefer to be doing something else entirely (such as reading a book); or be reconstituted as willing to be sexually active in a different way. However, until his posturing-folly can be reached, revealed to him, and re-trained, the inevitable girl-victim positioning is reproduced through her being 'caught up in a whirlwind of sexual posturing'.

It is (of course) unclear who would reach, reveal or re-train boys – experts, *loveLife*, mothers, fathers or girlfriend? Nevertheless, while this 'whirlwind of sexual posturing' positions girls as without volition or control, she is later figured in Text 3 as *acting sexually* 'to keep a boyfriend' – agency that is exposed as coercive due to power relations that obliterate her precautionary voice and exaggerate her exposure to risk (through inevitable unprotected sex). The dangers of early sex induction and teenage pregnancy rates are rehearsed again in Text 3; but here with even more pervasive risks of HIV-infection acquired through non-penetrative forms of sexual activity, like oral sex and 'manual' introduction of semen into vaginas.

However, it is not only the teenage girl's *body* that is at risk; but her *mind, psyche and self* is inscribed with the psychological damages of sexual exploitation to the extent of extinguishing her identity entirely, viz. her 'identity as [an] individual can easily be *lost* in [her] role as a conquest, a notch on a sexual belt' (my emphasis). Thus, while sexual experience 'fills boys up' with manly subjectivity, it is represented here as 'rubbing girls out'. This erasure pivots on the thwarting of her subject positioning within conventional discourses of femininity that empty girls of sexual agency (Macleod, 1999); and weld sex (desire and pleasure) to love, inscribing it with the emotional qualities of 'modern intimacy' (Giddens, 1992). Thus, 'inter-subjective relationship' – and *not* sex per se – is offered as the adult transfiguration for women (cf. HHD: Hollway, 1984a).

The coercive 'whirlwind of sexual posturing' in which both boys and girls find themselves positioned in Text 3 – seemingly beyond their volition and control, but with differently gendered subjective effects – is predicated on further contours of experience and risk inscribed by a stormy-and-stressed adolescent subject position. Text 3 establishes these experiences and risks of lack of control, even if tagged on to a paragraph dealing with girl-victims (cf. gender-slide), as universally applicable to *all* teenagers, as follows:

- ❑ Easy availability of drugs and alcohol that disinhibit sex;
- ❑ Frequenting contexts of normative sexual activity where refusing sex is difficult, e.g. 'the highly charged atmosphere of parties and clubs';
- ❑ Failure of rational thought to guide responsible and reflexive sexual behaviour;
- ❑ Being 'less equipped' (than adults) to anticipate and ward off peer influences, pressures for sex and unwanted sexual experiences.

The constitution of such adolescent vulnerability certainly invites custodial protection. Several issues are flagged here for exploration in later chapters. Traditional, authoritarian custodianship over these risky bodies/selves in risky situations – that is of punitive boundary setting and proscription of teenagers' behaviours, and whereabouts, to enforce sexual abstinence – is displaced by a model of youthful subjectivity that draws



on Foucault's disciplinary power. Thus, the self-regulating *responsible-teenager subject position* relationally appears as a function of a particular kind of parent and parenting. This is a (a) *modern and confident parent*, who issues accurate information, and is unthreatened by other sources of sexual knowledge, and risk situations, that surround youth. This is also a (b) *trusting parent*, who engages in open, supportive communication about risks, issues and values, and trusts that teenagers will make informed decisions from this secure base. Parental willingness and ability to adopt, and refuse, these positions will be the focus of Chapter 8. The assumption that the stormy-and-stressed adolescent *want* to make the subjective shift to the responsible-teenager subject position; and is indeed *willing* to participate in this refashioned inter-subjective space, and accept responsibilities for self-regulation, is picked up in Chapter 7.

### Universality of risky storm-and-stress positions for South African youth

The consequences of the *storm-and-stressed subject position* for teenagers – and for their custodians, as above – are many. Uncritical biological reductionism in developmental psychological theorization and health education materials positions young people as incapable of grasping the risks of sexual activity, and of having poor judgement in how others negatively influence them (see Chapters 1 & 4). This has also produced social scientific research that is obsessed with premature, promiscuous and irresponsible adolescent-sex as an 'Other' to mature adult, conjugal sex (Warwick & Aggleton, 1990). Along these lines, I have constituted the *pregnant and HIV+ girl-victim* as the totemic, universalizing default position that is deployed as the scare tactic of unbridled adolescent risk – both for girls and boys – in *Lovelines*. In Chapter 7, I will unpack some of the inter-subjective tactics that *Lovelines* offers to 'save' or shore-up this victim to prevent the inevitable. Before moving on to further unfolding the positioning of mothers in relation to their daughters, I will briefly explore the working – and seductive power – of the construction of stormy and stressed adolescents.

In Chapter 1, the storm-and-stress model of adolescence was set up as a prevailing trope in the western developmental psy-complex, coupled to much empirical public health

research – intentioned as it is towards governmental protection of young people through mobilizing social and subjective change to maximize ‘normal sexual development’ and well being. The adolescent, so positioned, is somewhat awkwardly cast into local South African contexts of young people’s experience and sexual decision-making (see Chapter 4). I do not intend to ‘prove’ whether this stormy and stressed adolescent exists or not; my post-colonial interrogations here are deeper. Why has *this* globalized model of adolescence, as the hegemonic, ontological view of the young person, come to count as true, here and now? How is it mobilized within the *Lovelines* series, and what interests might be served through this?

My reading is of a global model of storm-and-stress adolescence holding in place a fragile blanketization of HIV/Aids risk to heterogeneous South African youth; and that this positioning works to prevent raced-white, middle classed *LoveLines/Fairlady* readers from excluding themselves, their children and their childrearing practices from regulatory surveillance and governmental work to prevent HIV/Aids risk (or to maintain their risk-safety). It defends, thus, firstly, against middle classed mothers’ ‘othering’ of risk, which would be possible if swarming, polysemic, local narratives of nuanced and patchy risk exposures were opened up in mass mediated health educative texts. Secondly, it defends against ‘politically incorrect’ talk – in a newly democratic South Africa - of racialized inequality of resourced environments for young people. In this way, biologically irrefutable hormonal surges constitute ‘similarities’ that level the subjective and social playing fields.

I suggested above that the repeatedly recycled citation of antenatal data in *Lovelines* – that cements the generic girl-victim’s elevated HIV/Aids and pregnancy risk-status and her sexualization (see also Chapter 4) – was generalized to incorporate middle classed *Fairlady*-readers. My interest is in *that* (possibly un/wittingly encoded) generalizing representation itself, rather than ‘correcting’ it with a caveat.<sup>1</sup> Print media are a notoriously ‘blunt instrument’ for reaching finer segments of populations or for critical examination of the implications of nuanced risks (J. Kitzinger, 1998b). This would include, for example, exploring historicized interfaces between risk/disease, poverty, the

apartheid-aftermath of private and public health care services, health education, forms of employment, parenting custodial arrangements around children, parenting cultures, etc.; and unpicking the complex inter-subjective positioning that inscribes the multi-determined sexual experiences of young women. These contextual contradictions, and the resourceful ways of 'making do' in power-skewed power relationships with boys/men, are displaced in *Lovelines* in favour of a stereotypical one-size-fits-all representation of storm-and-stressed adolescents; global risks of sex, drugs and peer influence; and essential/immutable crystallizations of gendered sexualities.

This coercively psychologized worldview appears to support *Fairlady's* prevailing heterosexual, middle classed positioning of its reading subjects and is taken-for-granted as 'normal', 'natural' and 'neutral' – *not* raced or classed, *not* 'ideological' in any easily discernible way. This neo-liberal ideological position emphasizes similarities – for example, 'the *human race*', 'people are *just people*', 'sex is *universal*', '*everyone* is at risk of HIV/Aids', and so on - and de-emphasizes diversity and specificities; because 'difference' exposes ruptures of power, privilege and poverty, and makes assertion of individual choice, and achievement through plain hard work as personal effort, uncomfortable (cf. Kottler, 1990; Stoler, 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). It would appear then that alliance with 'universal' theories of 'individuals' removes the politics of muddy contextual obstacles of South African pasts-present-futures, and scaffolds individual responsibility for risk-safety and well being.

*Lovelines/Fairlady's* audience of mothers is class-privileged. Without exclusionary caveats, the antenatal teenage pregnancy scare tactics penetrate any classed or raced denials of vulnerability or projections of risk that prevail in South Africa, e.g. 'HIV/Aids doesn't affect me' because 'HIV/Aids is a black disease' associated with poverty (Joffe, 1998, 1999). *Lovelines'* address recruits *all* mothers of *all* young people into protective or vigilant positions – as in: *your teenaged child* could be sexually active; and *your teenaged child* could be infected with HIV; and *your teenaged girl-child* could get pregnant. The use of a generic storm-and-stress adolescent-risk subject position allows no-one to escape the panic and the governmental action of risk-prevention; although, as

I have argued above, panic in *Lovelines* tends to coagulate around *all* girls rather than boys. This defends against the prejudicial effects of 'risk group labeling' in HIV/Aids discourse – that HIV/Aids is said to target particular 'groups' of marginalized and stigmatized people in South Africa, e.g. sex workers, truck drivers, mine-workers, Africans, prisoners in jails - and asserts the more politically correct 'risky behaviours' position, that the high-risk sex behaviours of *any* individuals produce HIV-infection, rather than group membership per se (Patton, 1996).

## 5. CONSTITUTING SAFE FAMILIES

The gendering of the *Lovelines/Fairlady* reader-parent as female, as mother-custodian responsible for talking about sex with children, and the powerful recitation of the girl-victim subject position, fabricates the inter-subjective space between these positions in particular ways. This section focuses on the mother-daughter relationship, in so far as the mother is positioned in the *Lovelines* series as the socializing, same-sex role model from whom the daughter learns – seemingly tacitly, through observation – the cultural maps for femininity, female sexuality, body-esteem, relationships (with men), intimacy and family. This places mothers' less-than-ideal sexual relationships under surveillance; and also polices who may talk with girl-children about sexuality in families, when and why.

### Mothers between two worlds: then and now

In TEXT 5 (overleaf), adult women – as sexual partners of men *and* as mothers – are figured as snared within the binary pull of contradictory subject positions in discourses. These contradictions manifest, in a series of then-and-now narratives, as disjunctive 'traditional' or 'modern' subject positions with regard to female sexuality. The impact of feminist discourses on the empowering positions now imperative to modern women is evident. Mothers appear as torn between the following proliferating subject positions and disjunctive sexual selves:

## TEXT 5

*Lovelines 2: Fairlady, 26 April 2000, p. 64*

### Sexual responsibility <excerpt>

'Close your eyes and think of England' was the Victorian idea of female sexual responsibility. Sex was duty – you had to procreate for the benefit of queen and country. Although sexual morals today are very different, in most parts of the world a woman's sexual responsibility is still equated with child-bearing.

Naomi Wolf says in *Promiscuities*, 'it used to be that girls watched their mothers, and learned how to be women that way.' But most modern mothers are themselves the products of inadequate sexual guidance. In the era of female liberation, women have greater opportunity than ever before, except when it comes down to controlling their sexual destiny. In most countries sexuality is still dominated by male chauvinism, and evidence is that SA is among the worst.

How does today's woman teach her daughter to cope with traditional male attitudes to sex when young girls are told that traditional barriers no longer apply? Add to this the often ambiguous relationship between mothers and daughters, and sexual morals may seem confused to the modern young girl. The result is that most teens don't learn about sex from their moms but from an older sibling or friend.

What is this notion of sexual responsibility and how do you make it part of your life? On one level, 'sexual responsibility' implies taking precautions against pregnancy, HIV/Aids and other STDs. But it's not simply about sex, it's about an 'absolute' responsibility to yourself – both body and soul.

European studies show that teenagers desperately want advice about relationships. In SA even basic sexual education is lacking in most schools. This puts an even greater onus on parents to create an environment in which children can talk openly about sex.

As parents, friends or mentors we should see it as our responsibility to teach our children about the power of a good relationship and the respect that ought to be tacit in sex. 'Respect' is the key to sexual responsibility; respect for yourself, your body and your sexual partner.

- ❑ A traditional *reproductive-sex position* ('doing your conjugal duty to procreate'); and a modern *reproductive-health position* ('to control their sexual destiny');
- ❑ A traditional *sexually repressed position* ('the products of inadequate sexual guidance'); and a modern *sexually liberated subject position* ('to talk openly about sex'); and even
- ❑ A modern *reproductive-health position* ('taking precautions against pregnancy and HIV/Aids') and a thoroughly modern, neo-liberal/Foucauldian *care-of-the-self position* ('absolute responsibility to yourself – body and soul').

In Text 5, 'traditional' appears as a fairly fuzzy sign for 'what-was', and for 'outmoded', in terms of a march of enlightened progress, viz. Victoriana, the apartheid-era, cultural practices, chauvinism, sexism, strict sexual morals, reproductive sexuality, etc. 'Modern' stands poised as tradition's antithesis: 'female liberation' inspired by feminisms, and also, undoubtedly, South Africa's post-1994 constitutional apartheid-escape. These refractions are not as unequivocal as they first seem – past is bad, now is good - for both seem to hold positive and negative subjective moments for women. Text 5 assumes the obviousness of the benefits of transition from 'traditional' to 'modern', for example, through the assertion of a constitutional discourse of legal rights for all citizens, and protection of women's equality (in principle).

However, it is apparently the loss of traditional certainties – for example, moral rules about sexual activity, or clearly gendered roles in sex - that have cast these ambivalently between-worlds mothers into confusion; and also into conflict with (a) the unchanging 'chauvinistic males' in their lives, and (b) their daughters as wholly 'modern young girls'. Men as heterosexual partners-of-women are given short shrift in this *Lovelines* series – an issue to which I return below - but here women and girls are positioned as swept along with the tide of changing modern-times, as *agents of social and subjective change*, struggling against domineering 'chauvinist males' and culturally hegemonic 'traditional male attitudes to sex'.

It is into this uneasy personal-political arena that mother as protective custodian and cultural broker, and daughter as risky girl-victim, are cast. The armouring effects, on girls especially, of motherly communication about sex have already been established in *Lovelines*: delaying sex activity until the 'right' partner appears, at the 'right' time, and responsibly informed decision-making is made to happen. My review of literature (Chapters 3 & 4) found youth repeatedly represented as wanting to learn about sex and sexuality from parents as primary sources; but when this did occur, they were dissatisfied with the biological content, and moralistic or embarrassed tone, of communications. Text 5 cites unspecific 'European studies [that] show that teenagers desperately want *advice about relationships*' (my emphasis). The anxiety and guilt of

mother-custodians, who have *failed* to 'teach' their daughters about 'relationships' and 'respect', is compounded by the positioning of daughters – these risky, potential girl-victims – as *ignorant* ('lacking basic sex education'), as *possibly misinformed* ('learning about sex from an older sibling or friend'), and as *confused* (by 'changing sexual morals'). I deal with the curriculum of mothers' sexual pedagogy in Chapter 7. Here, I focus on the motherly transmission of 'relationship-advice' to daughters, and how this constitutes complex intergenerational surveillance of feminine subjectivities in the family cell.

'Teach' – as in 'it is our responsibility to *teach* our children about the power of good relationships and the respect that ought to be tacit in sex' – has power-laden implications of discourse by experts to those-who-do-not-know. What emerges in Text 5 is that it might be difficult for mothers to impart such sagely expertise (to daughters) when her own familial relationships – with male partners *and* with her daughters – are perceived to be less than respectful, or problematic or dysfunctional in some way. The mother-daughter relationship, which *should* contain discussion on the value-based issues raised, is instead characterized as failing, because sex is talked about with siblings and friends *in place of* the mother; and also characterized as 'often ambiguous'.

### The ambiguous mother-daughter relationship

It is unclear in Text 5 why the relationship between mothers and daughters is constituted as 'often ambiguous' – as vague, unclear, indistinct and uncertain. In Text 5, this ambiguity is cast against taken-for-granted assumptions that it should (or need) *not* be so; perhaps more along the lines of *unambiguously* 'supportive, trusting, confiding and intimate', according to some rather celebratory feminist representations of mother-daughter relationships (e.g. Thompson, 1990: see Chapter 2).<sup>2</sup> Several speculative heuristics about the ambiguous relationship follow.

The mother might reflexively/interactively position herself as 'old-fashioned' (or 'traditional') in relation to her adolescent daughter; and so fail to create a 'comfortable

environment' for discussion about sex or relationships, and unwittingly inscribe shame on sex, and mistrust on the girl's pubertal body. This 'traditional mothering' position would be associated with conservative sexual values, and punitive, authoritarian boundary setting. The daughter might protect her mother's taboo through her own silence, and (resourcefully) seek sexual knowledge elsewhere. Further, the daughter might be critical of, or confused and threatened by, discrepancies she detects between what her mother 'says' about sex, and what she 'does' in the context of her relationship with her man-partner.

These heuristics assert powerful 'non-verbal', and possibly unconscious, layers of communication about sex that are performed, and inscribed on positioned bodies and selves, in families. Social learning and psychoanalytical discourses asserted – in the review of literature in Chapter 3 – that children learn intimate and affectionate communication through observation, internalization, modeling, mimicry *and* experience within a parent-child, object-self, inter-subjective relationship (e.g. Arcana, 1981; Chodorow, 1978; Benjamin, 1988; Thompson, 1990; Whitaker, et al., 1999). My Foucauldian angle – refracted through panoptic media discourse, such as Text 5 – finds this child-gaze constituting a powerful form of surveillance over the sexual and intimate behaviour of parents.

The cited quotation from Naomi Wolf's *Promiscuities* in Text 5 – 'it used to be that girls watched their mothers, and learned how to be women that way' – is a riddle. Its past tense implies that, in this confusing in-between between 'traditional' and 'modern', girls have *stopped* 'watching' their mothers' performance of gender and sexuality, and stopped learning to be women through this modeling, imitation and attachment. Why or how might performance and observation of gender in families stop? A mother's embarrassment, confusion or silence about sex would constitute a pedagogical performance for her daughter's audience; as would any sexualized conflict (or lack of 'respect') between her mother and her male partner. Expanding Wolf's (1998) riddle-fragment exposes a disjunctive moment in a pre-hippy-culture of her (Wolf's) girlhood in



San Francisco, and predictably adds Oedipal Drama to the 'ambiguous relationship' between mothers and daughters hinted at in Text 5, as follows:

It used to be that girls watched their mothers, and learned to be women that way. But by 1968 it seemed that our mothers were suddenly watching someone else – the media equivalent of Barbie, the James Bond girl and the blonde Carnaby Street dolly bird – and learning to be women all over again in a new way. We too were watching Barbies and learning what womanhood meant. *This upended the natural progression of the generations, and at a critical moment in our development, would give us – we who would look more like Barbies than our mothers could – more power than they had.* (p. 27, my emphasis)

Within psychoanalytic discourses, Wolf (1998) has the teenage girl poised between her same-sex role-model mother and various Barbies, from whom she would learn her feminine wiles; and her opposite-sex sex-object father on whom she would (safely) practice her feminine wiles. The sexualized and seductive teenage daughter is competitive with her mother – in Wolf's formulation, as rival-Barbies, in terms of fashionable physical appearance - for the constituting male gaze. Understanding this within a swirling model of Foucauldian power: knowing, sexy, seductive teenage girls become more powerful than their mothers, as desirable and desiring sexual subjects; and they position themselves watchfully in relation to objects/subjects of womanhood. They also position themselves playfully – as 'daddy's girls' requiring special attention and protection – in relation to their fathers, and by generalization, to other (older) boys/men as the James Bonds above (cf. Walkerdine, 1997; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

I allude to this classic psychoanalytic narrative of gendered positioning, not because it reveals the real truth underlying 'difficult' or 'ambiguous' relationships between mothers and daughters, but because it makes explicitly *discursive* what seems to be a taken-for-granted contemporary truth implicit in health promotion materials – such as Text 5 above - about the 'difficulty' of parenting girls. Other reasons for highlighting this narrative are the close attention given to (Foucauldian) surveillance of the parental sexual relationship (by children) and counter-surveillance of the sexualized teenage body/self (by the mother). The layered target audience for this *Lovelines* series in *Fairlady* - with mothers as the primary audience and adolescents as a secondary

audience, through picking up a mother's magazine in the home – is further evidence of disciplinary surveillance. The *Lovelines* series is written for mothers *and* daughters; and surveillance is constituted here as watching over one another's shoulders as they read about themselves and one another. They are thus able to imagine and calculate the subjective actions, reactions and misdemeanours of the other; and, on both sides, are geared towards producing, exacerbating, defusing and avoiding 'gender trouble' (cf. Zizek, 1989).

### The normal-problematical relationship with scoundrel-men

The *Lovelines* series, as I have suggested above, is aimed at refolding or de-traditionalizing mothers as a relay point, so that they, apparently progressively liberated in the contexts of their own sexual and subjective lives, may 'socialize' their children more appropriately (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). This is, of course, a brutal and defeated task, for nary a social norm, institution or power structure twitches in the worldly realm beyond the 'democratic kitchen'. As Text 5 implies: men remain positioned in 'traditional' ways, clinging resolutely to patriarchal payoffs. However, if role modeling and performance of intimate relationships are of equal importance to open communication about sex with children in families (see Chapter 3), then the conditions of possibility for transformation within mothers' heterosexual inter-subjectivities with men shift uneasily into view. These relationships ought to demonstrate in practical, ordinary ways, every day, to teenage daughters *and* sons, the qualities of intimacy, equality and respect that the *Lovelines* series – and indeed *loveLife* and *Fairlady* – espouse as the democratic sexual ideals of adulthood.

In this closing section, I will widen my analytic lens to consider the positioning of mothers within less-than-ideal, family-in-crisis relationships within the *Lovelines* series as a whole – that is, a broader focus than Texts 1 to 5, examined previously. The 17 *Lovelines* texts appear, in originally published serial form, in Appendix 1.

Dimensions of 'relationship-trouble' – constituted here as the normal-problematical relationship – are understood as 'normal', shared by copious women everywhere, and so readers are able to identify with and make sense of narratives of domestic conflict and turbulence. In modernity, the ideal-relationship is recognized as a representational fiction, and people – and women in particular – are schooled to expect 'trouble' in the day-to-day practice of intimacy (Coward, 1984; Frith & Kitzinger, 1998; Giddens, 1992). These ordinary relationships between consenting adults are deemed 'problematic' in the *Lovelines* series because of a perceived *sexual* abuse of power in favour of men (e.g. non-dialogical approach to penetrative, unprotected sex, violence, etc.). This threatens both individual women's health *and* the public health of a productive workforce of able-bodied men and children. Women must thus be (hailed and) responsibilized as social-collective and individual-family custodians (Foucault, 1978). This health-crisis then represents a 'therapeutic opportunity' for expertise, to conduct urgent transformation by women themselves (Rose, 1992).

The textual configurations of normal-problematical sexual relationships in which mothers are bogged down in the *Lovelines* series serve several functions. First, they serve as identification lenses, truthful ways of seeing and naming 'abuse' that hail mothers into reflexive recognition of their own unreflexive positioning; and then, once subjected, impel them to work tirelessly to transform their circumstances, inwardly (emotions, attitudes, thoughts) and outwardly (actions towards others and on themselves). They ought to do this as much for their own sakes as for the sakes of their daughters; who are 'watching' and 'learning' from their relationship performances.

Second, these normal-problematic relationships might hook mothers into discursive participation in a slightly different way. Being unconfident in the ways of the 'modern world', these narratives of relationship-trouble identify and fill 'gaps' in her own sexual knowledge, and the mother is then equipped to re-deploy the wadges of information, anecdotal stories and any useful tactics in talking with her teenagers about sex and relationships, or use these for her own future reference. Girls who gain access to such

narratives and positions through reading *Lovelines/Fairlady*, or talking to mothers about them, are forewarned and forearmed.

A third function that is served by the deployment of these normal-problematical relationships is that *Lovelines* (and *loveLife*) appears to capture a proliferating range of family-forms – however acculturated, ‘non-standard’, exploitative and dysfunctional these might be – and still confidently assert their unvaryingly universal message: open communication by parents about sex delays sexual activation of adolescents, etcetera. The tactic of displaying apparent diversity seems to anticipate and ward off local resistances to talking about sex with children owing to, for example, prohibitive religious values, diffused responsibilities in extended families, single parenthood, or fears about sex abuse of children. I return to this point below.

Mothers are positioned in the *Lovelines* series as struggling to hold together, transform and break free from normal-problematic relationships – struggling against ‘tradition’ and ‘traditional men’ – in the following figures, discourses and ‘stories’. The texts referred to here are chronologically serialized in Appendix 1:

- This is a mother who, knowing her legal rights, is struggling to make (informed) choices in a current crisis in her life – choosing to be a survivor, and choosing to be in charge of her sexual destiny [*Lovelines 3*]. She is saying ‘no’, and asserting her constitutional rights to: (a) have sex with whom and when she wants to, and not be raped; (b) refuse abuse by a violent male partner; and (c) terminate unwanted pregnancy.
- This is a mother who is initiating a sexual relationship with a new partner, after a divorce or separation [*Lovelines 5*]. She is investigating risks of HIV-infection, making responsible decisions to protect herself and her partner during sex, and (having trouble) negotiating condom-use with her (condom-averse) partner.

- This is a mother who is struggling to communicate her own sexual needs and desires openly to her chauvinistic partner [*Lovelines* 6]. She is being forced to have 'dry sex'<sup>3</sup>, therefore doubling her risk of HIV-infection.
- This is a mother who is struggling with monogamy in her marriage, and the risks of HIV-infection this exposes her to. She has either had an 'affair' with another man, involving 'unprotected sex'; or has discovered her partner's 'affair' with another woman [*Lovelines* 8], or that he is using sex workers while working elsewhere [*Lovelines* 14]. She is investigating crisis measures to ensure her own physical and emotional health, e.g. tests for HIV and other STIs, and counseling.
- This is a mother who, given the widening circles of those infected and affected by HIV/Aids in South African communities, may find herself: (a) HIV+; (b) caring for an HIV+ partner or family member, who has lost their employment due to illness, and will possibly die (or has died) of Aids [*Lovelines* 11]; and (c) caring for – as custodian and mother – children from an extended family, who have been orphaned by Aids [*Lovelines* 17].

Clearly, some of these womanly positions – and the inter-subjectivities they inhabit and sustain – would find more resonance with white-raced, middle classed *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers than others. Nevertheless, the adult men in these normal-problematical relationships are extremely harshly figured – 'scoundrels' counterpoised against the struggling-to-be-strong subject position of mothers – as 'traditional' (or 'cultural') and so ignorant of and resistant towards 'modern' ways. The normative scoundrel-man is figured as violent and sexually coercive, and unwilling to use condoms; as sexually irresponsible HIV-infectors only interested in their own sexual pleasure; and as dishonest, deceitful and unable to 'commit' to sexual partnership. This construction is resonant of Hollway's (1984a) 'MSD discourse' and reproduces patriarchal norms of hetero-masculinity (Wilton, 1997). This positioning fabricates men as *non-dialogical* sex partners – partners with whom safer sex *cannot* be reasonably and

safely negotiated (W. Parker, 2005a) – and effectively sentences women to full risk-responsibilization and risk-vulnerability.

No other subject positions appear to be available for men in the *Lovelines* series – no discursive trajectory appears to edge them towards ‘more liberated’ positions; there are no lines of movement or flight. The *scoundrel-man subject position* is disconcertingly similar to the positioning of adolescent boys earlier in this chapter, implying linear developmental passage to irresponsible manhood *if* alternative subject positions for adolescent boys cannot be inscribed, early on, to ward off this scoundrel. This works as scare tactic for mothers; the reiteration of her responsibility to refold sons – if only to protect girl-victims and future wives. Similar to the ‘flat’ representations of men, no democratic (‘modern’) or duty-bound (‘traditional’) relationships, or even eccentric or contradictory relationships between adult partners are figured.

Why is this so? What interests are served through this univocal hailing, and closure? Do *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers receive these normal-problematical relationships as aberrant, deviant, ‘other’ cases; or as normative? Despite the fatal flaw of skewed power relations in the parental deployment of sexuality, do these normal-problematical relationships resemble ‘standard-nuclear families’ that function in conventionally custodial ways over children? Would these sexual combatants be willing and able to agree on an appropriately enlightened pedagogy about sex to impart to their children? Is there a ‘safe, comfortable environment to talk about sex’ in these families? Finally, can scoundrel-men be trusted to talk about sex with children, and particularly with sexy/confused adolescent daughters?

Simanski’s (1998) analysis of mediated sex education advice for parents – in American women’s magazines – found fathers’ positioning conventionalized as expressively marginal, whether he is physically present or not. This was explained in terms of traditional feminine and masculine roles inside and outside of families. In South African contexts, uneasiness about male sexuality and men’s non-dialogical approach to sex operates as a virulent form of cultural anxiety about the sexual abuse of children (Giddy,

1996), with especially poorer/rural mothers mistrustful of their own partners' sexual intentions with their girl-children; and also similarly suspicious of older boys and adult men in their communities with respect to (coercive) transactional sex with girls (Paruk et al., in press).

In further rhizomatic ramifications to this uneasy Freudian plot in South African conditions of possibility, biological fathers are frequently physically and emotionally absent – constituting children as 'transferentially needy' of male attention and affection (cf. Thomas, 1996b). It is also likely that mothers' sex partners are boyfriends, or second/third husbands, producing complex, extended familial arrangements of stepfathers and 'uncles' in custodial power relations over (seductive) girl-children who are not blood-related; and so not apparently beholden to 'incest taboos' as biological fathers might be (Bell, 1995). High rates of unemployment, particularly among adult, working class men, alcohol and substance abuse, sexual violence and child sexual abuse (by men) are commonly understood as features of a 'masculinity crisis', produced through post-apartheid dislocation and transformation of women's rights (Lemon, 1995). Scoundrel-men are further represented in South African literatures as 'disciplining' or 'taking revenge on' their 'too modern' women partners through violent physical, emotional and sexual abuse of her (the mother), and her daughters (Poynton, 2003).

There is little evidence that directly couples these figurations to white, middle class families, where socio-economic status buffers personal and collective risk; and protects 'privacy' of families against untoward surveillance. This is not to rule out such experiences for this audience of *Fairlady/Lovelines* readers, but to consider the rhetorical effects of such blanket-risk positioning. The constitution of this unsafe-family – replete with dangerous, irresponsible and non-dialogical men - legitimizes the strident hailing in the *Lovelines* series of *all mothers*, particularly with regard to maternal interpellation as risk inoculators through adolescent daughters, of a future generation of (risk-safe) wives/mothers. Firstly, an alliance with (modern) psy-complex techniques stakes out gendered inter-subjectivities in particularly 'enlightened' ways that refuse (or

exclude) the abnormalities and dysfunctions of these pre-modern Others. Mothers, as agents of social change, inscribe their daughters with such new deployments of sexuality and alliance.

Secondly, the constitution of the unsafe family crystallizes maternal responsabilization for talking about sex. *Lovelines* in *Fairlady* – a South African *women's* magazine – was selected for analysis because such gendered targeting and government (of women) is made explicit; whereas this feminization of audience is masked in other sex communication materials through the gender-neutral noun 'parent' (Burman, 1994). The hailing of mothers and daughters functions then as a 'minor qualification', an acknowledgement of a locally risky swerve of power, within the globalizing, liberal-therapeutic pedagogy inscribed by *Lovelines/loveLife* on 'parents', viz. 'love them enough to talk about sex'. The hailing of mothers as worthier, safer and more malleable custodians – underscored by the visceral assumption of inner female wiring, the 'natural maternal instinct' to fiercely protect her offspring from harm, with her very life – is predicated on the stereotypical subject positioning of fathers/men as untrustworthy and self-interested.

Thus, mothers *keep, care for and protect children* where men do not; mothers are *sexually responsible* where men are not; mothers are *willing to change* – and so, *compliant* with *Lovelines/loveLife* messaging – where men are not. It remains to be seen how mothers will be put to work to effect this 'talk' in the next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> The caveat would be that behavioural surveillance research in wide ranging sentinel sites in South Africa, and household surveys of sero-prevalence, suggests that many young people are not sexually active; and poorer young adult women are *more* at risk than youth of HIV-infection (e.g. Kelly & Parker, 2001a; Shishana & Simbayi, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> This is cast against rival strands of writing on constitution of sexual subjectivities through mother-daughter relationships. Flax's (1993) essay *Forgotten forms of close combat – mothers and daughters revisited*, reviews various feminist psychoanalytical writings (including Kristeva's positions) on the (seemingly essential) ambiguities of gendered inter-subjectivities. My own position is more aligned with (feminist) Foucauldian governmentals, who have read family- and gender-regulation



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operating through the psychologized micro-practices of mother-daughter (inter-subjective) communication (Burman, 1994; Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers, 1992; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

<sup>3</sup> 'Dry sex' is an African acculturated sex practice of using various agents (e.g. herbs, chemical solvents, baby powder, etc.) to dry out vaginal lubrication, thus increasing pleasurable friction for the penis (Boikanyo, 1992). Risks of sexually transmitted infections through unprotected sex are exacerbated through abrasions and lesions to vaginal membrane-tissue (LeClerc-Madlala, 2001).

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## CHAPTER 7

### MICRO-PRACTICES OF COMMUNICATION – MOTHERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT SEX

#### 1. MANUFACTURING WILLING COMMUNICATORS ABOUT SEX

##### Texts, territories, tactics

This chapter continues the reading of *Lovelines* texts (themselves), to unpick the ways in which an audience of middle classed motherly subjects (*Fairlady* readers) are directed towards particular discursive practices - talking about sex with their adolescent children, to inoculate them from risk of HIV/Aids. Chapter 6 focused on the establishment in *Lovelines* of broad-brush, discursive and ideological, relational subject positions between *what-is-risky* (*as-we-are/were*) and *what-is-safe* (*as-we-should-be*) poles; and inscribed the imperative for mothers to move towards preferred 'modern' sexual subjectivity – thereby cementing her governmental position as relay point in families as she re/inscribed daughters, sons and (scoundrel) men partners with the responsible and responsive sexualities required in an advanced epidemic in a society in transition. Positioning of a 'double audience' – mothers *and* daughters (in relation to men/boys) - achieved shifting identifications and tiered planes of oversight over the feminine subjectivities of women and girls.

This chapter focuses on the guidelines – the practical *how-to tactics* - issued to mothers through discourses of expertise related to childrearing, sex communication and risk in *Lovelines*, to effect this transformed inter-subjective familial space of sex and sexualities that centres on 'openness'. Whatever 'accurate information' *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers are impelled to inscribe – or re-inscribe over wrong information – through conversations about sex with children, mothers are schooled in the stylistics of communication characteristic of modern 'intimacy', viz. disclosure, sharing, mutuality, discussion, trust and 'closeness' (Giddens, 1991, 1992).

The maternal need for such intimacy-pedagogy stands on several discursive legs. First, her partner, and more significantly, her adolescent children may be unwilling to receive her conversations about sex, which requires hard intellectual, emotional and communicative positioning work to thwart conflict - in order that a 'democratic', 'open' and 'dialogical' surface is inscribed (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Second, with respect to the parent-child axis of the deployment of sexuality in families, this new 'openness' represents a challenge to how parenting relationships with developing children may have been managed in the past (cf. Wyness, 2000); a challenge to perceptions of authoritarian parenting among particular South African families (see Chapter 4). Thus, a new authoritative parenting position is called forth, an informed, talking, trusting parent; who, through the operation of disciplinary power, fabricates a new, self-regulating and sexually responsible teenager.

This chapter focuses on the conversations about sex that are scaffolded in the inter-subjective spaces between mothers and adolescent children; and the coercive psychologized knowledges and technologies that fabricate those conversations. The analytical praxis of subject positions remains largely unchanged from Chapter 6, although shifting the questions posed to *Lovelines* texts (about micro-practices) opens spaces for resistances and unwillingness to 'talk', and discourses are found scrambling to resolve 'problems' of unease, silence, conflict and recalcitrance. The inter-textual territory is slightly expanded beyond the margins of the *Lovelines/Fairlady* series with addition of two excerpts from *loveLife* print supplements, *Talking and listening, parents and teenagers together – Find out how to make it easier* (*loveLife*, 2000c, 2002b) and *LoveFacts* (2002c). These texts provided cruces of communicative micro-practices in more detail than did *Lovelines*. The former supplement (*Talking and listening*) was 'advertised' as inter-text in the *Lovelines* series as additional (*loveLife*) resource material.

### **Manufacturing willingness**

The work of talking about sex assumes willingness of participants: a willing-talker, a willing-listener, and willingness to turn-take these roles. The various goals of conversations cannot

be achieved without the implicit 'rules' that often obscure or are disrupted by power relations in fairly unexpected ways. For example, analysis of the *Lovelines* texts in Chapter 6 uncovered several disruptive and disjunctive moments in these conversations: repressed or embarrassed mothers had not, did not or could not talk about sex with partners or children; fathers, men and boys would not talk to women or girls; ever-resourceful (but risky) teenagers talked to their friends instead; and panoptic experts said open-sex-talk *should* happen, and *would* if the subjective surfaces of mothers' sexual repression, reticence, lack of knowledge and non-authoritativeness were re-inscribed.

As I suggested in Chapter 4, the *2001 National Survey of South African Youth* (*loveLife*, 2002a) found similar contradictions with regards to parent-youth communication about sex; inter-subjective unwillingnesses that *loveLife* spun as 'challenges' to further youth- and parent-campaigning. I will argue in the analytical narrative coupled to TEXT 6 (overleaf) that (*loveLife*'s) simultaneous mobilization of discursive complexes of storm-and-stress adolescence and youth-culture for parental and youthful audiences of subjects produces disjunctive, and unwilling to talk/listen, communicative positions.

Text 6 begins with such an uneasy domestic scenario, and seeks, dramatically, to rearrange it – on subjective and inter-subjective levels – through transforming the use of physical space, 'gaze' and conversations in particular ways that fabricate and inscribe '*willingness to talk and listen*'. The intention of the *Lovelines* series to impel (endless) talk about sex – evidenced in the *loveLife* brand-logo at the foot of Text 6, and each *Lovelines* column, '*talk about it*' – effectively controls the topic: 'it' signifies 'sex', as if this were obvious and taken-for-granted. 'Talk about it' also implies a willing audience of listeners. Readers might now know *why* they should talk, but: *who* is talking to *whom*? *Who* is mostly doing the talking, and *who* mostly listening? And, *why* should they listen?

Text 6 rehearses the pivotal *loveLife* truism about children's 'willingness' to talk/listen to parents about sex – and to 'learn the truth' about sex from these conversations, rather than, say, be aroused, amused or angered by them, viz.

### TEXT 6

*Lovelines 4: Fairlady, 24 May 2000, p. 63*

#### From the horse's mouth

The word *S'camto* is tsotsitaal. It comes off the street and means 'talk about it'.

It's the name of a new multilingual TV programme, initiated by *loveLife* in an attempt to get teenagers to talk about sex openly among themselves and with their parents. If you consider that half the population is under 15, that on average youngsters start experimenting with sex at 14, and that the HIV rate is increasing fastest among 15- to 20-year-olds, *now* is not a minute too soon to start talking about sex. So parents, on Thursday nights get comfortable on the couch with your kids for the next episode of *S'camto*.

As *loveLife*'s Judi Nwokedi explains, *S'camto* aims to inform young South Africans about their sexual rights, behaviour and choices.

'Sex is normal and fun. Let's do it, but let's keep it healthy,' says Nwokedi. 'It's the way this information's imparted that makes *S'camto* young, fresh and an extremely exciting approach to talking about sexual activity', she says. Fifteen youngsters present the programme. They were trained in the use of video cameras and then sent back to their home environs, where they sought out their friends and contemporaries and spoke about... sex. The 13 programmes deal with various sexual issues, including the differences between men and women, having sex for the first time, virginity, HIV/Aids and puberty. Each episode has 'information billboards' with useful facts and advice for viewers.

Just as the TV series *Yizo Yizo*, which focused on gangsterism and drug abuse in schools, was considered highly controversial by both media and audiences, so *S'camto* is sure to pick up flak. Sadly, some of it will come from parents who think the programme is too explicit. Yet parents need to realize their children are being bombarded constantly with information about sex – some of it false, some true – via the media. The importance of a show like this can't be underestimated. According to *loveLife* research, most children say they want to learn about sex from their parents, which is why parents can play an important role in watching *S'camto* with their children. The onus is on parents to participate, initially by watching the programme, but also to encourage their children to communicate their own expectations, fears and questions. The next step would be for parents to clarify further the issues identified in the programme.

One of the *S'camto* presenters, 14 year-old Hlayisanani Salani, says it was only after his involvement in the programme that he felt empowered to make the correct choices. Isn't this what all parents want?

*S'camto* is screened on e.tv at 6 pm on Thursdays.

Contact *loveLife* at Box 45, Parklands 2121, (011) 327-7379 or email [talk@loveLife.org.za](mailto:talk@loveLife.org.za). Also visit [www.loveLife.org.za](http://www.loveLife.org.za).

*loveLife*: talk about it.

Yet parents need to realize their children are being bombarded constantly with information about sex – some of it false, some true – via the media... According to *loveLife* research,<sup>1</sup> most children say they want to learn about sex from their parents... (Text 6)

To some extent, this willingness-refrain serves to reassure mothers subjected to an injunction to talk to their children about sex. Talking about sex has a corrective 'truth-making', rather than a prurient, function; its beneficence is backed by science; it is not forced on *unwilling*, innocent children who have no defenses against adult custodial power – most children *want* it. This may then masquerade as 'child-centred' pedagogy. But the willingness-refrain is a sometimes baffling construction in the *Lovelines* series, because it appears to apply even to moody and difficult, stormy-and-stressed adolescents who evidently actively repel parental conversations about sex. In Chapter 6, the universal stormy-and-stressed subject position available to young people fashioned how mothers as custodians were expected to understand, oversee and 'manage' adolescence. For example, mothers were primed to expect – as a normal developmental phase – mood swings, rebelliousness, uncooperativeness, arguments, sexual experimentation, negative peer influence, etc. Thus, an irritable, rebellious, becoming-adult exterior is figured to mask the confused, vulnerable inner-child underneath, who is apparently (still) willing to receive information, guidance, support and counsel from a parent.

### Knowing youth-culture

While this positioning of young people does not disappear in Text 6, it is marginalized by an allegedly 'fresh and extremely exciting' alternative discourse about youth subjectivity. The *youth-culture model* figured adolescence as a liminal time of rebellion towards the restrictive norms of adulthood and the status quo of authority (Patton, 1996: see Chapter 1 & 4). The idea here is that young people, to manage risk, should actively and collectively construct their *own* sexual knowledges through dialoging peer experiences - to mobilize against the false consciousness of adults (and parents).

Text 6 is inscribed with the traces of such youth-culture discourse. This operates in complex ways, inter-textually, as a text within a text, with youth (and parents) figured as sitting on a sofa watching 'youth-culture' on a screen - a *LoveLife* television programme, *S'camto*. I will deal with life on the screen first, and then audiences of it. The appropriation of the word '*S'camto*' from street slang or 'tsotsitaal'<sup>2</sup> forms a hip language code that maintains collective youth-culture community; as would consumer mores like clothes, music, cell-phones, media-choices, etc. (e.g. Marlin-Curiel, 2003). A new construction of sex ruptures the (now tedious) rehearsal of scare tactics on youth sexual activity and risk, and normalizes it as both pleasurable *and* responsible, viz. 'Sex is normal and fun. Let's do it, but let's keep it healthy.' *S'camto* - as 'reality television' - seeks to capture 'the truth' of authentic youth experience in 'home environs', from a youth perspective; and to share these accurate, positive and appropriate messages with youth audiences, assumed to be similar to themselves. Each episode also includes 'information billboards' - a textual ribbon at the bottom of the screen, streaming bits of advice, websites to visit, and facts. The youth-culture subject position inscribes young people as proficient information bricoleurs, putting together pieces of 'advice' from various sites, sources and genres.

In the closing paragraph of Text 6, a 14 year-old boy, Hlayisanani Salani, a *S'camto* presenter, appears to testify about his 'empowerment' to make 'correct choices'. This is a significant dis/appearance in several ways. First, given the negative subject positioning of teenage boys in Chapter 6 - as 'rapacious', 'exploitative', 'posturing', etc. - his 'empowerment' is hopeful and heartening, although the account is offered in the third person (not a direct quote); and it speaks uneasily on behalf of *girls'* empowerment and choices, implying equality. Furthermore, readers are not privy to what exactly these 'correct choices' are (e.g. no-sex, safer-sex, some other kind of sex), which reproduces parental anxiety rather than simply assuaging it through giving them 'what all parents want'. *Is* this what all parents want? The youth-culture subject position figures peer-group regulated norms of sexual activity and risk management, which threatens the positioning of parents as custodial regulators of youth sexuality. Text 6 attempts to undo this apparent conflict through re-establishing 'the onus on parents to participate', and laying down guidelines for this participation.

The appearance of *S'camto* as inter-text in Text 6 clearly functions as an advertisement for multi-media *loveLife* programming; and as an invitation to youth and parents to watch it on television together. The upbeat tone, established through the 'young, fresh and extremely exciting approach to talking about sexual activity', reproduce *S'camto* as a kind of interactive 'edutainment' genre of media – inscribed with serious imperatives of 'education', but masked by 'fun' (cf. Usdin, 1998). There are ironies in such progressive political representations of 'youth' programming that refer to the obscuring of power relations between youth themselves, e.g. between youth of different ages, classes or genders; or between those who are articulate or sexually experienced, and those who are not. It also obscures power relations between youth and adults.

Radical youth advocates, who are adults – in Text 6, Judi Nwokedi of *loveLife* – are drawn in to account for youth-culture to *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers, who are mostly adults. Such youth knowledge must be legitimized as 'accurate', and this requires hidden controls by adult-editors in television documentary production; and also surveillance by parents. Neurotic adult misinterpretations – as in objecting to 'explicit' material, or creating 'flak' – are anticipated and defused by adult spokesperson Nwokedi. It is unclear whether Nwokedi is figured as 'the horse's mouth' in the title of Text 6, from which 'straight talk' or 'truth' would emerge; or whether this referred to authentic youth-voices. However, the deflection of 'adult flak' forms an important part of lessening parental resistance to *loveLife* messaging as a whole; and Text 6 functions to produce lines of coherence, collusion, consensus and consumption – rather than contradiction and controversy – between the *Lovelines* print-media series, and youth-oriented television-programming like *S'camto*, a *loveLife* programme, or *Yizo Yizo*, not a *loveLife* programme.

#### Watching telly: the *S'camto* sofa as 'functional site'

It is implied in Text 6 that 'teenagers' always already constitute a willing audience for *S'camto*. Through watching, they are enabled to examine and discursively participate in this performance of youth-culture positioning from a distanced observer's position. *S'camto* hails them directly through its depiction of authentic youth experience, equips them with



'choices', and their appropriation of offered positions will pivot on complex negotiated identifications with 'me-fictions' and 'not-me-fictions' based on perceived similarities and differences of experiences in relation to those figures on screen (Stuart Hall, cited in Strelitz, 2003).

Media-reception studies have sought to 'capture' how such youth programming is received by various youthful audiences – by way of 'evaluating' its reach, penetration and effects (see Chapters 1 & 4). Scattered journalistic reports have surfaced of inflammatory resistances from youth, apparently alienated by fictionalized representations in *loveLife* campaigns of articulate, streetwise, sexy, black/African, urban youth 'who ha(ve) an answer for everything' (Deane, Waga Mabe, Maphumulo & Pillay, 2000, p. 11).<sup>3</sup> My interest here is how the inter-textual invitation in Text 6 to watch *S'camto* is extended to teenagers *and* parents. Here *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers – (mostly) raced-white, middle classed mothers – are invited to watch *with* their adolescent children, for a particular pedagogical-communicative *purpose*. I will argue that this fabricates a layered audience, and a particular *context* for viewership, that mediates (or moderates) youth subjectivities through surveillance.

Strelitz's (2003) argument continues – still following Stuart Hall – that appropriation of mediated representational (subject) positions is contingent upon, not only the figures on the screen, but on the viewing context itself, which shapes the purpose/uses of consumption. In one of Strelitz's media reception studies with youth audiences, black (South African) students from rural/peasant backgrounds, at a historically white university in South Africa, congregated daily in a common room they referred to as 'The Homeland', to watch *exclusively* locally-produced television programming (e.g. news, soap operas, situation comedies, music, documentaries, etc.). Strelitz found that these students used consumption of local media to shore up a powerful 'Black-African identity', against the sell-out (to whites), westernized 'globalized identity' they encountered daily on the campus generally, and in their academic curricula in particular. The point here is not about the hailing of 'authentic cultural texts'; but that 'appropriation' of such mediated texts is construed differentially in terms of the constitution of the audience, and also by the *contexts* of

consumption. Thus, the ways in which mediated texts – like *Lovelines* or *S'camto* – are used by text-consumers slip away from the stated intentions of well-meaning text-producers who appear as inter-textual voices in Text 6, like Judi Nwokedi of *loveLife*.

Text 6 invites mothers to watch *S'camto* with their teenage children – scheduled on television at 18h00, apparently a 'family-friendly-time' when parents are home from work. At a cosy level, this seemingly benign and obvious tactic – 'get[ting] comfortable on the couch with your kids for the next episode of *S'camto*' – figures a typical domestic, family scene. Foucault (1977) might find this as a 'functional site', a pedagogically useful space for training or implantation (see Chapter 2). Parent-mediated television watching is not an innovative parenting practice in developmental psychology; or in media reception studies. For example, parents are routinely advised to intellectually scaffold younger children's exposure through television to violence and sex to moderate harmful effects of 'trauma', misunderstanding or inappropriate behavioural modeling (e.g. Durkin, 1995).<sup>4</sup>

For pedagogical and communicative purposes in Text 6, the *S'camto* sofa dramatically reconfigures the space and the surveillant gaze between parents and children. Thus, instead of awkward, personal, face-to-face conversations about sex, adolescents, their older/younger siblings, and mothers sit (probably uncomfortably) side-by-side on the sofa, and watch 'other' youth figured on the screen. They may also talk to/about the screened figures rather than to/about one another; thereby reducing conditions for possibilities of conflict.

However, the assumption that youth will be willing to *share* the sofa to watch *S'camto* is a clue to pedagogical coercion. A Foucauldian lens finds power exercised – by parents, over children – through a double-layered surveillance in this context of viewership. The *purpose* of (and youthful pleasure in) watching *S'camto* is taken over, and becomes something else, or someone else's. If the *S'camto/loveLife* life-on-the-screen constitutes one panoptic watchtower of surveillance over its youthful audiences, parents on the sofa beside them constitute another. Thus, appropriation of youth subject positions is placed under surveillance of, and the effects mediated by, parents. Mothers watch their teenagers

watching 'other youth', like '14-year-old Hlayisanani Salani'; and are in a better position now to calculate risks, and to ward them off with spoken warnings and monitoring. Following the *Lovelines* tactics in Text 6, their youthful offspring will then be impelled to account for reception of these 'other youth' subject positions, in terms of recognition, counter/identifications, knowledges gleaned and, humiliatingly, gaps that they were unable to fathom (cf. 'questions' or 'fears').

Youth-culture subjectivity is rooted in public peer-participation – the power of youth voices together, in dialogue with one another. This is evident in the hailing of a group of 'us' in Text 6, 'let us [have sex], but let us keep it healthy' – ironically, spoken here by adult ringleader, *loveLife*'s public relations officer, Judi Nwokedi. It is a *knowing* sexual voice; active, and challenging of the traditions of authority, the 'them' of parents who keep the keys. In a swerve of *S'camto* power, parents are indicted as purveyors of misinformation, embarrassment and restriction; youth know more about sex (the really useful stuff) than they do. It is not unexpected, then, that youth might prefer to 'talk about it' with friends rather than with parents (cf. *loveLife*, 2002a: Chapter 4). It is unclear how this unwillingness might be managed in a private domestic scene that masquerades as Thursday-night's-family-entertainment, but turns out to be a staged 'discussion' about youth sexuality. How does a youth-culture subject position operate in 'private', one-to-one conversations with parents? How do teenagers respond to being singled out from peers, caught in the panoptic searchlights on the sofa, and impelled to confess?

### The rhetorical powers of 'discussion'

To prevent disrupted, disrupting and disruptive conversations, mothers are offered a script with which to scaffold 'open discussions'. The tactic of parents watching *S'camto with* teenagers, and 'discussing' it afterwards, is offered to mothers in Text 6, as 'a teachable moment'. This psychologized construct emitting from authoritative, child-centred, or 'sensitive' parenting technologies, refers to any object, incident, activity or minute transgression in the passage of daily life that can be deployed as pedagogical conversation with developing children, to incite knowledge construction in particular ways (Walkerdine,

1984, 1986, 1987a: see also Chapters 1 & 2). Teachable moments stand then in place of authoritarian punitive control of children; they actively scaffold cooperative inter-subjective spaces of intellectually reasoned and reasonable responses, and 'co-regulation' – a transitional form of joint-supervision (by parent and child) of activities – as developmental precursors to autonomy-granting and self-responsibility during adolescence (Berk, 2003, p. 567; cf. Baumrind, 1991).

With respect to sex and sexuality, the goals of such interaction – as they appear in Text 6 – would be (a) to find out what young people know and understand; (b) to correct misperceptions and clarify issues; and (c) to re-inscribe values and expectations that guide family conduct. A liberal-therapeutic approach to sexuality education is 'child-centred', holding to a preference for parental responses – in age appropriate ways, as directly and as 'anatomically correctly' as possible – to children's *questions* about sex (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998); or certainly is orchestrated through communicative work to appear child-centred (Walkerdine, 1984, 1986; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Thus, if children and teenagers *fail* to ask questions – or are somehow constituted as 'unwilling' to ask – parents are instructed to take the custodial initiative, and use 'teachable moments' to incite talk, learning and co-regulation (see Chapter 3).

These tactics for swarming, smaller conversations about sex throughout childhood and adolescent development stand in opposition to the now out-dated 'sex education' approach of one Big-Birds-And-Bees-Talk at menarche. I return to this proliferation of moments later on. In this section, the notion of 'discussion' – as the particular kind of conversation that would be helpful following the *S'camto* episode in Text 6 – is unpacked. I want to explore how such a sexual pedagogy – a 'teachable moment' where teenagers are expected to *learn* something from parents – is made to appear as '*open*', where anything can be said, conflict-free; as '*democratic*', where mothers and teenagers are figured as having equally powerful 'voices' in conversations about sex; or even as '*child-centred*', where mothers appear to usurp their powerful adult positions in favour of adolescent children (cf. Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). I will briefly examine four aspects of this harnessing of power below, as follows: (1) the rhetorical structure of 'discussion'; (2) the marginalization of other contexts

of parenting or discipline; (3) the ignoring of conversational resistance; and (4) the ground-rules of approachability.

First: the rhetorical structure of 'discussion'. Text 6 does not name this kind of conversation between mothers and children about *S'camto* as 'discussion' – I have situated it within this familiar-to-me context of 'debate' or 'dialogue' in academic discourse. Thus, 'discussion' might involve the intellectual and rhetorical work of examining in detail, sometimes by disputation; to dispel or cast aside flaws; or to settle and decide on an advantageous position. 'Dialogue' situates this negotiation within a conversation between two participants. These strategies seem to underscore what mothers would be expected to achieve in 'teachable moments'; and also some of the difficulty of these tasks, given their own crises of authority in terms of shaky bases of knowledge (see Chapters 3 & 4), and (possibly) even shakier sexual relationships with partners (see Chapter 6). To avoid trouble with respect to the *S'camto* discussion, Text 6 issues mothers with a script that narrativizes tactics chronologically for interaction in an apparently logical way, viz. 'initially', 'then', and 'the next step', creating opportunities for mothers and teenagers to take turns to speak and listen, as follows:

1. Watch *S'camto* together with teenage children.
2. Encourage communication of children's expectations, fears and questions.
3. Clarify the issues identified in *S'camto*.

In another communication context, where health providers were attempting to counsel patients on healthier lifestyles, a set of rhetorical tactics - *ELICIT-PROVIDE-ELICIT* - emerged to avoid (a) repeating information that people already know, and (b) the health provider having the 'last word' (cf. 'brief motivational interviewing': Rollnick, Mason & Butler, 1999; Rollnick & Miller, 1995). Both these factors were implicated in negative health outcomes for patients, who 'switched off' or believed the information 'did not gel' with their own experience. In this version of the health belief model of health communication to effect behaviour change, *elicit* referred to the health provider asking a question to open a conversational space for the patient to share their views (e.g. how do you understand your risks of HIV?); *provide* referred to the health provider filling in the gaps in the account, and

clarifying issues (e.g. well, if you're struggling to get him to use a condom, let's talk about some things that might work better...); and *elicit* referred to the health provider asking about how the proffered advice is received (e.g. how would those things work for you?).

This is, of course, a different context of health communication - evidently *not* a cosy chat about sex between a mother and her daughter. However, this example of prescriptive health advice cloaked in 'patient-centredness' does demonstrate – by allusion – several important features of the tactics advocated by Text 6. Hard interaction-work must be accomplished by the health-provider (cf. mother) to keep the goal of this conversation on track while seeming to be 'democratic' and 'patient-centred' (cf. 'child-centred'). These tactics operate to *hide* the power that circulates around and settles with the 'regulator' of such conversations (cf. health provider/mother), who determines the topic, cues speaking turns and controls the 'outcome'. This is a particular kind of conversation/discussion that must be 'won' through manufacturing settlement on a particular (preferred, advantageous) understanding. Such discussions about healthful risk-avoidance are not 'open' in the polysemic post-modern way where any reading would be valued as equally interesting; 'false' information, 'wrong' expectations or 'groundless' fears would be dispelled as dangerous.

A final point relates to the power accorded mothers in Text 6, viz. 'further clarifying issues identified in *S'camto*' (Tactic 3). This is a step akin to 'provide' in the *E-P-E* model above; and is not followed by further democratic 'elicitation'. This operates to give mothers the power of closing argument, of having the definitive last word. This is to avow mothers' panicky-adult readings of *S'camto* (and youth sexuality) as the definitive and authoritative ones; and to inscribe these regulative truths on children. Such mothers that are subjected by these imperatives for discussion are rescued from confrontation of the operation of their power through the other two tactics scripted in Text 6. These mothers allow their children to watch *S'camto* (Tactic 1) – rather than to forbid viewing on grounds of its 'explicitness' – and choose to watch it with them. This effectively grants autonomy, and then monitors it closely. These mothers also encourage their children 'to communicate their own expectations, fears and questions' (Tactic 2). Through these tactics, these mothers may

appear - to themselves, to their partners, to their children – as ‘democratic’, even ‘child-centred’, and as open-minded, sensitive, authoritative, modern parents.

### **Disciplinary vacuums for open-sex-talking**

Second: the marginalization of other contexts of parenting or discipline. Another way in which parental or custodial power over (teenaged) children is masked in Text 6 – and indeed in the *Lovelines* series – is through the foregrounding of such ‘democratic moments’ as the possibility of the *S’camto* sofa-discussion between mothers and teenagers. Conflict is seemingly thwarted here, regulation masked and harmony maintained. As I will show below, conflict inevitably breaks out in other *loveLife* materials – for example, the print supplement, *Talking and listening, parents and teenagers together – Find out how to make it easier (loveLife, 2000c)* – and is again warded off through clever parental conversational tactics. This regulated democracy in the inter-subjective spaces between mothers and teenagers is inscribed over the inter-subjective surfaces of what custodial conversations about sex and other conduct existed before, and may still exist in certain situations in families.

In Text 6, the apparently harmonious democracy in talk about youth sex in *S’camto* holds the overt policing of beleaguered boundaries of in/appropriate teenage conduct in the textual margins – for example, flashpoints or ongoing, roiling negotiations around unsuitable friends, money, poor schoolwork, seeing boyfriends, use of the telephone or internet, household chores, appearance and clothes, curfews, etc. This elision between (ideal) ‘democracy’ and (real) ‘discipline’ lies at the heart of tension between authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles; and also the judgement – by psy-complex experts – of those ‘others’ who resort to outright conflict with and/or punishment of children who transgress familial decrees or parental expectations (e.g. working class mothers in Britain: Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; or black/African families in South Africa: Bozalek, 1997; Richter, 1994).

Little (if any) parenting advice appears in the *Lovelines* series to assist mothers with gradated granting of autonomy, co-regulation, boundary setting, monitoring activities and appropriate responses to in/advertent transgression that supposedly accompany 'talking about sex' with adolescents. This assumes that such stylistics of parenting-practice – sans the embarrassing sex-talking bits – are always already installed within white, middle-classed mothering, possibly through subjective alliance with (western) developmental psy-complex norms. I return to these ideas in Chapter 8, parents discoursing parenting.

### Resisting resistance

A third tactic that appears to defuse conflict between parents and teenagers – and so fabricate the inter-subjective space between them as 'harmonious' and 'democratic' – is the *ignoring* of or *transcendence* above teenagers' resistance to parental conversations about sex. Thus, parents are required to carry on talking regardless of rude or disruptive listener displays. I turn now to TEXT 7 (overleaf), a table that was extracted from the *loveLife* print supplement on parent-teenager communication, produced for their 'double audience'. I draw this text into analysis in this chapter on *Lovelines*, because this supplement is referred to, inter-textually, in the footers of most *Lovelines/Fairlady* columns, inviting readers to order it by writing to or phoning *loveLife*, or via their online website.

Poised against Text 6, where conflict was carefully regulated and made to disappear into the margins, Text 7 produces moments of rupture, and places 'the inevitable conflict' in plane of sight. The excuse for this rupture is not to advocate arguments and occasional shouting (sadly), but to inscribe vigilance, and tactics whereby it (conflict) might be warded off by parents, or safely repaired conversationally. Powerfully, Text 7 normalizes teenagers' unwillingness and resistance to parental conversations about sex. This resistance can now be understood to operate from the *stormy-and-stressed subject position* – with teenagers fabricated as immature, moody, irritable and rebellious – and from the *youth-cultured subject position* – with teenagers constituted as angry with authority, embarrassed by parents' neuroses about sex, and preferring to talk to friends. Teenagers are figured to perform these positions, and their unwillingness to talk with parents about sex, through



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TEXT 7</b>  <b><i>Talking and listening: parents and teenagers together –  how to make it easier (loveLife, 2000c, p. 3)</i></b></p>	
Common teenage behaviours	Suggested parental responses
Shouting and arguing	Talk normally. Do not shout or argue back.
Silence	Respect their silence. Give them time.
Embarrassment	Be kind and understanding.
Experimenting with sex and drugs	Provide them with correct information.
Frequent emotional changes and moods	Ride with them and try to understand.
Withdrawn	Show your support and love.
Rudeness	Try not to react to rude behaviour.
Walking out	Stay calm and try talking again later.
<p>Although irritating, teenage behaviours like folded arms, rolling eyes, humming and frowning while you are talking should just be ignored.</p>	

displays that derail conversations by flouting politeness principles. In Text 7, they (delightfully) seize power from parents through the 'smaller' disruptions of humming, frowning or rolling their eyes while parents are waxing lyrical; or through 'larger' disruptions, like shouting, arguing back, non-responsive withdrawal, rudeness or walking off.

Dealing with such conflict-ridden ruptures of harmony and openness requires the discursive practices inscribed by a *sensitive parent subject position*. This parent is one who is obviously 'understanding', 'loving' and 'supportive', but inscribed with tenacious abilities to consistently and patiently articulate or demonstrate such attributes under pressure, and in the face of resistance or direct provocation. Why does this feel like a disarming gender-slide towards motherly, emotionally articulate women? Although the conflict must be repaired to reproduce 'democracy', this is clearly not a conversation between equals. The repair pivots

on adoption of a mature-adult position, which must maintain the balance of 'correct information', implacability and tolerance of custodial power in relation to the younger person's (immature) guerilla power-grabs. This adult must recognize what is going on conversationally – at a meta-level – and calmly choose what cues will be responded to, which ignored (e.g. rudeness, humming, frowning, shouting); and, significantly, will *not* 'argue back'.

This is Žižek's (1989) parallax effect where the identification point is an inter-subjective 'relationship' between positions (see Chapter 6); significant in the 'double audience' targeting of the text. Nevertheless, the panoptic adult-position of surveillance transcends the communicative battlefield, and, through psychologized understanding and communicative manoeuvring, offers no reactive opponent for the younger person to fight with. Paradoxically, this is an adult-position that remains 'there' – evidenced in 'give them *time*' or 'talk again *later*' (my emphases) – as an approachable presence. I examine how this parental fiction of authority ruptures in Text 8 below with the adoption of a reverse-switch, non-guerilla teenager position that conversationally props up inept parent-communicators.

It is significant that such clear youthful displays of unwillingness to talk (withdrawal, silence, embarrassment), or to listen (rudeness, shouting, arguing), do not function as signs for parents to simply give it up. In other words, the verbal and non-verbal cues of refusal deployed by young people – of saying 'no', of resisting power – are not respected. Rather, the imperative to keep-on-talking is relentlessly renewed and re-inscribed; there is no escaping the will to discourse for parents or for adolescents. This regulatory incitement inscribes both what kind of speech occurs, and silence.

For example, Text 7 problematizes 'argument' – a central feature of 'discussion' – both in terms of a 'common teenage behaviour' and also something that parents should avoid, viz. 'do not argue back'. For a parent to 'argue back' – with the implications of getting angry or losing control – is constituted as giving the power of authority away to recalcitrant young guerillas. This appearance of harmony pivots then on a fairly passive young person who will listen and receive 'information' uncritically, without 'argument' – and so, 'settlement' may

be fabricated in a one-way street. It is noteworthy that teenagers' 'silence' is construed here as risky and unreachable; and while silence may be 'respected' initially (as 'privacy'), it is powerfully inscribed with healthy-talk's absence, which must end, or be coercively ended, sooner rather than later.

### Being an askable parent: pick your moment

Fourth: the ground-rules of approachability. I turn to TEXT 8 (below) to examine another tactic by which openness, harmony, and democracy are fabricated in the inter-subjective 'relationship' between parents and teenagers. Dramatically, these tactics – directed here at young people (instead of parents) – turn the tables, swirl the power around, and rupture both 'implacable adult' and 'guerilla teenager' positions explored previously. Text 8 was extracted from a *loveLife* print supplement about youth sexuality, sex and risk - for youthful audiences - titled *LoveFacts*.

#### TEXT 8

*Talking About Sex, in LoveFacts (loveLife, 2002b, p. 8)*

<Excerpt>

You know that sex talk helps you make healthy decisions and you wanna talk with your parents, but you're scared they'll think you're up to something. Well, most parents do find it very difficult to talk to their kids about sex so it's up to you to help them. Pick your moment! They are busy folks, and they don't wanna talk serious stuff when they're busy. Remember, things were different for them – there was no HIV – when they were young! Watch a sex-talk show with them or show them an article. Ask their opinion about a sexual subject – they may have interesting ideas. Show respect and admiration that they're talking because we know it's not easy.

Text 8 addresses youth directly as 'you', deploying catchy Americanized slang to mimic how youth are thought to speak to one another, e.g. 'wanna talk' or parents as 'folks' (my emphasis). Following the dicta of a youth-culture position, Text 8 equips knowing and willing young people with strategies for managing conversations about sex with parents – even inscribing responsibility on young people for this, viz. 'it's up to [us] to help them.'

This *parent-pedagogical subject position* offered to young people inscribes knowledge and willingness – they ‘*know* that sex talk helps you make healthy decisions’, and they ‘*wanna* talk’ with parents (my emphases) – and insightful understanding that such sex-conversations are ‘difficult’ and ‘not easy’ for *both* conversants (cf. Foucault, 1978). This difficulty of inter-subjective communication is constituted in various ways that affect the subjective positioning of young people and parents, and the power relations between them.

Here, parents reduce their approachability for conversations, or their ask-ability, through suspicion and defensiveness (see Chapter 3). They are figured as jumping to conclusions (about sexual activity) when young people talk or ask questions about sex, viz. ‘they’ll think you’re up to something.’ Parental embarrassment is construed as due to sexual socialization by their own ‘old-fashioned’ parents, and also unfamiliarity with the ‘modern territory’ of sex, viz. ‘things were different for them – there was no HIV – when they were young’ (see Chapters 4 & 6). By turns, young people are figured as making assumptions about parents – also jumping to wrong conclusions – and these derail potential value of conversations. These mistakes, and their corrections, appear in Text 8 as follows:

- A *busy and irritable parent* does not mean they do not want to talk about sex at all, or ever. It means they are busy now, so come back at a better time;
- An *embarrassed parent* does not mean they do not have interesting things to say or share. So, try something less threatening: watch a sex-talk show on television and ask their opinion;
- A *stumbling-fumbling parent* does not mean they deserve ridicule. They are trying their best; it’s hard to do, so show appreciation and respect.

The parent-pedagogical positioning offered to young people fabricates a custodial position to *protect* struggling parents, a controlling position to *facilitate* harmonious conversations about sex. They are figured as adept at ‘reading’ parents (cf. parallax effect): as having the communicative skills to ‘pick the [appropriate] moment’ for a conversation about sex, and to control the conversational flow through judicious questioning and active listening. Strategic youthful willingness – demonstrated here through its power to bestow on parents ‘appreciation and respect’ – wards off conflict. The avoidance of sexual topics involving

personal experience and focusing instead on 'neutral' objects - an article, a television programme - defuses the potential for threat-defense, accusation-denial or embarrassment. In an ironic inversion of the previous *S'camto* sofa-discussion (Text 6 above), youth are enjoined in Text 8 to engage their parents in discussion following a sex-talk show to assess whether 'they [parents] may have interesting ideas'.

Thus, young people are constituted as a powerful form of surveillance over parents, recognizing 'what presses their buttons', and wryly avoiding this; and recognizing their shortcomings as custodians and sexual subjects, and the gaps in the knowledge they proffer. Such youth-culture positioned teenagers are situating conversations about sex with parents in a wider context of other kinds of sex-talk they will engage in with different people at different times, for different purposes.

## 2. TELLING IT STRAIGHT AND SLANT

This chapter set out to examine how conversations about sex between parents and teenagers are invented in the *Lovelines* series. The previous sections focused on how particular *rhetorical forms and tactics* are deployed to scaffold talk about sex between parents and teenagers; and *how* power is masked - and also swerves around - in these conversations so that they may appear to be 'open', 'willing' and 'conflict-free' affairs. This section brings the *content* of these pedagogical conversations into view; the explicit and implicit curricula of *what* conversations about sex should encompass, and *when* these should occur. The discursive/ideological subject positions of mothers as sex-implanting custodians, and daughters as potential girl-victims, have been explored in Chapter 6. TEXT 9 (overleaf) returns to these positions to consider how inter-subjective spaces between them are figured. This thread is picked up once again in discussions with parents in Chapter 8, where parents talked about Text 9 as 'stimulus material'. In the way of a recursive fold, my analysis of parental discussions 'talked back to' the analysis in this Chapter. My examination of Text 9 focuses on the proliferating conversations about 'womanhood' between mothers and daughters, and the emergence of different discourses of sexual knowledge and 'registers' of sexual communication.

### TEXT 9

*Lovelines 7: Fairlady, 5 July 2000, p. 156*

#### **Straight talk**

Does your teenage daughter know when you had sex for the first time and with whom? Does she know whether you liked it?

If the thought of discussing such intimate details with your child makes you cringe, consider that before she can turn to you for advice on sexual matters, she needs to know that you've had to make the same difficult choices and that you can relate to her.

Every mother dreads the day when she must start talking to her teenagers about sex. But experts say if you wait until they're teenagers, you've waited too long. It should be an 18-year conversation about love, relationships, values and sex that begins as soon as your child starts to communicate. Establishing open communication early also ensures that your children will turn to you if someone's been abusing them.

Before you begin to discuss sexual issues, be clear about your own values, but avoid coming across as pedantic and authoritarian.

As a parent you must make an effort to understand and be willing to talk about the issues your daughter's grappling with, many of which may make you feel uncomfortable. These could include questions like: How do I know if I'm in love? Will sex bring me closer to my boyfriend? How do I know when I'm ready to have sex? Will having sex make me popular or will boys think I'm a slut? How do I tell my boyfriend I don't want to have sex without losing him? How does contraception work?

Research shows that talking to your children about sex doesn't encourage them to become sexually active. It also shows that teens who are close to their parents and can talk freely to them are less likely to have sex at an inappropriately early age or to fall pregnant if they do have sex.

Try to persuade your daughter to make responsible sexual choices, but don't be too prescriptive. This could include telling her you think children in high school are too young to handle the emotional consequences of sex, especially given today's risks. If she does decide to have sex, she should use protection in the form of a condom. Explain that it's not unusual for a teenager to find herself in a sexually charged situation and that she needs to think in advance about how she'll handle it. Will she say 'no' or will she negotiate to use a condom? Also tell her that she doesn't have to have sex to keep her boyfriend.

You could also explain that one of the reasons you're concerned about teens drinking and taking drugs is that this often leads to unprotected sex, which may result in pregnancy or infection with STDs.

If you're still not convinced that talking to your children about sex is a good idea, consider that while the overall fertility rate's decreasing, more teenagers are falling pregnant. Also keep in mind, that interviews with teenage boys show many of them think it's fine to force sex on a girl who's drunk or stoned. And one of the most common myths among teens is that pregnancy can't happen

the first time they have sex.

You can dispel these myths and help your teenager make responsible decisions. The trick is to be easy to approach and interesting to listen to.

For more information check out the website [www.scamto.lovelife.org.za](http://www.scamto.lovelife.org.za) or [www.lovelife.org.za](http://www.lovelife.org.za), or contact *loveLife*, Box 45, Parklands 2121, phone (011) 327-7379, fax (011) 327-6863 or email [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za).

**loveLife: talk about it.**

### The 18-year long conversation

Before the risky 'myths' that afflict 'teenage daughters' can be dismantled, Text 9 grapples (still) with mothers' unwillingness to talk about sex. This unwillingness appears either as '*dreading* the day when she must start talking (my emphasis)', as in knowing that she cannot put inevitable-talking off forever; or as 'still *not convinced* that talking to [her] children about sex is a good idea', which indicates that talking is not inevitable at all. Both are problematical subject positions, but in different ways. The recalcitrant *unconvinced* mother must be persuaded to 'talk'; and to this end, science is *redeployed* to *refold* her (see Chapter 6). She is issued with ever-more draconian scare-tactics to 'consider' and 'keep in mind' – the ubiquitous rates of teenage pregnancy, coercive sex, alcohol and drug abuse, HIV-infection, etc. She will, thus, hopefully, be scared into talking with her children about sex to ward off such horrors; and be shamed by her failure as a custodian to do so, and by her stupidity.

The *dreading mother subject position* is the preferred feminine surface in Text 9; and it is made clear that '*every* mother dreads', thereby widening the problematical-normative address. She has accepted the inevitability of sex-talk as premises of her custodial position; she has been persuaded by, 'bought in' to, the risk-injunction - but she is going about it in the wrong way. She is malleable, receptive to expert counsel, willing to dispel her dread. Her dread is exposed as the myth that a once-off, explanatory 'sex-talk' with daughters coincides with menarche – 'the day she must start talking'. This Big-Birds-And-Bees-Talk at

puberty is largely constituted of biological 'facts of life', and is now outmoded within contemporary liberal-therapeutic sexual pedagogy (see Chapter 3).

The modern ideal – strongly inscribed with psychoanalytic truths about children's sexualities – is set up then as a proliferating and swarming disarray of 'smaller' discussions throughout children's development towards adulthood, viz. '*an 18-year conversation* about love, relationships, values and sex' (my emphasis). Paradoxically, this ideal operates within a 'modern' climate of *dread* of pervasive sexual risks for all children, e.g. sexual abuse; and information is constituted as a protective form of panoptic vigilance, e.g. 'she needs to think in advance about how she'll handle it' (cf. Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Rose, 1990, 1998). It also operates in a 'modern' climate where sex and sexuality are normalized as the major currency for adult-selving and subjectivities, through anticipation (Foucault, 1978); and risk deployed as a 'calculated rationality for action' (Castel, 1991).

The inter-subjective space that 'contains' this sprawling conversation – the mother-daughter relationship – should then be emotionally manufactured in a particular way, from early childhood. The *dreading* every-mother has 'waited way too long [to talk]', and so Text 9 picks up this 'open relationship' in the middle – where most mothers are, with already-teenage daughters. Given that this very mother-daughter relationship was previously figured as 'ambiguous' and 'confusing' (Chapter 6), the marginalization in Text 9 of how this relationship is manufactured means that it suddenly and miraculously appears here as willing, open, confiding and intimate. I merely allude here to the copious writings on what else (other than sex) is inscribed on girls' bodies and selves through mothering, e.g. body-esteem, personal hygiene, grooming and food-guilt; touch, sensuality and affection; disclosing styles of communication and capacities for articulating care; posture, comportment, monitoring of physical whereabouts and space-anxiety; etc. (e.g. Apter, 1990; Bordo, 1993; Flax, 1993; Haug, 1987; Lee, 2003; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Walkerdine et al., 2001; Young, 1990, 2003).

The absence in Text 9 of this ongoing corporeal scaffolding of 'womanly' space between mothers and daughters – that is *not simply* about talking about sex and relationships every



now and then – is significant in two contradictory ways related subjective positioning of the *Lovelines/Fairlady* audience. First, the socialization of girls by mothers might be too obvious, banal or taken-for-granted to mention – because middle classed, psychologized mothers always already know this. And second, it might be too ‘classed’ (or class-privileged) to mention without creating offence; and so its relegation to the margins is a tactic to ward off division between women, or indictment of the ‘bad’ mothering practices of some of them as ‘others’ (cf. Alldred, 1986b; Burman, 1994; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). In both senses, a universalized one-size-fits-all approach to gendered socialization is opted for in a mass mediated magazine-text, which scaffolds a ‘universal maternal instinct’ (or will) to want and do the best for their children (Rose, 1990).

This ‘close’ and ‘can-talk-freely’ relationship between mothers and daughters appears in Text 9 to pivot on confession, on which mutual trust is forged (cf. Kerr et al., 1999). Mothers’ disclosures of personal sexual experiences are figured to produce dimensions of womanly similarity, empathy and identification, e.g. ‘[a daughter] needs to know that you’ve made the *same difficult choices* and that you can relate to her’ (my emphasis). Mothers also appear to consciously reach across dimensions of difference to display support of daughters, e.g. ‘you must *make an effort* to understand and be willing to talk about the issues your daughter’s grappling with, which may make you feel *uncomfortable*’ (my emphases). It also helps in *any* 18-year relationship, of course, to be ‘easy to approach and interesting to talk to’. These key communicative tactics for mothers – (a) establishing shared experience, (b) making an effort even if it’s embarrassing or difficult, and (c) approachability – appear to engineer the conditions of inter-subjective possibility for (d) reciprocal trusting disclosure from daughters, viz. ‘she can *turn to you for advice* on sexual matters’ (my emphasis). This refers to my previous reading of the perceived risk of uncommunicative teenagers’ silence with or withdrawal from parents in Text 7 above.

In a Foucauldian frame, the regulatory relay point is established then through getting the daughter’s troubled experience into plane of sight through confession, for normalizing surveillance. Thus, the narrative of the conversation – or ‘open relationship’ – in Text 9 is set up step-wise, as one step facilitates a ‘subjective surface’ for the next. This sequential

narrative of interactive positioning is scripted as follows. The (1) mother's disclosure of her own 'cringingly intimate details' is followed by (2) the daughter's confession of 'issues [she] is grappling with'; and this, in turn, by (3) the full might of the mother's regulatory gaze – evidenced in the imperative verbs that avow her authoritative voice above her daughters, viz. 'talk to her' (not *with* her), 'persuade her', 'tell her', 'explain to her' and 'dispel these myths' (my emphases).

This pedagogical inscription operates despite the incongruous warnings to mothers about being 'pedantic', 'authoritarian' or 'too prescriptive'. How can it *not* be *too* prescriptive? Text 9 appears to blur registers and statuses of talk about sex. This is *not* a gossipy exchange between two women friends about sexy encounters; it is *not* intimate sharing of needs with a sex partner. Although power circulates in these 'adult' discussions too, in complex ways, the mother-daughter relationship is *not* a democratic site of equals. It is a custodial and pedagogical arrangement of power that regulates both mothers and girls, and strategically engineers 'openness'.

### Competing discourses and ways of speaking sex

The empowered teenage-boy figure of Hlayisanani Salani (in Text 6 above) returns to haunt the teenage-girl in Text 9. He figured a *gendered* youth-culture subject position that had inscribed safer-sex practices within a sex-positive discourse, viz. 'sex is normal and fun, let's do it, let's keep it healthy'. Undoubtedly, similarly empowered and responsible teenage girls appear in *S'camto* and elsewhere, but their presence and sexual practice is strongly regulated in Text 9 (see also Text 10, below). This suggests an elision between public voices and 'private' registers of communication about sex for women; a point I return to below. The transition to a *responsibly sexually active young woman subject position* - by having safe-sex with a condom – is offered in Text 9 to adolescent girls as the fall-back or default option when abstinence ('saying no') has failed; and is also reproduced as difficult to manage and fraught with risk in terms of negotiating with exploitative boys to use condoms, dealing with labeling as 'a slut', and the 'emotional consequences of sex'.

The content of this sexual pedagogy for teenage girls – deployed here by mothers – appears as: ‘love, relationships, values and sex.’ It is no accident that sex comes last on the list, for discourses on love, relationships and values will be mobilized in Text 9 to ward off her sexual activity, and to hold her within an *abstinent*, or *not-now-but-later subject position* for as long as possible, to protect her from risk (cf. the *girl-victim subject position*, see Chapter 6).

The totemic status of this mother’s disclosure of her own sexual initiation – whether it involved the girl’s father, and whether she liked it – is worthy of unpacking as a ‘morality tale’ in this regard. This confession positions mothers’ as ‘accountable to’ daughters for their own sexual experiences (see Chapter 6). The intimate details are tantalizingly withheld in Text 9, and this invites *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers to participate through filling in details from their own experiences or from localized stories that circulate about ‘the first time’ and ‘virginity loss’. For example, accounts of young women’s sexual initiation are commonly slanted into either ‘it-wasn’t-nice’ stories (coerced, embarrassing, confused, unprotected, painful, anti-climactic); or ‘it-was-nice’ stories (special, romantic, planned-and-protected, pleasurable) stories (e.g. Thompson, 1990; see Chapter 3). Furthermore, mothers have expressed concern, in raising daughters, with preventing them from making the ‘same mistakes’ they themselves made, e.g. unwanted pregnancy, unwise partner choices, disrupted schooling; and of wanting ‘a better life’ for their daughters than they had (LeClerc-Madlala, 2001; Macleod, 1999; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; see also Chapter 8).

However, whichever way mothers’ anecdotes might be slanted in Text 9 – first-time sex as horrible/nice – the conditions of possibility for good-sex for women in the context of a good-relationship are pedagogically inscribed (as love, intimacy, security, safety, monogamy, etc. within a HHD: Hollway, 1984a). This serves to reproduce the idea that ‘sex is worth waiting for’, underscoring the daughter’s *sexually abstinent positioning*, viz. *avoidance* of sex for the time being, and also her *anticipation* of sex in the future. It is unclear whether this hetero-normative position permits non-penetrative sexualized practices (as ‘experimentation’), or issues a blanket-ban on *all* ‘sex’ as risky.

The above argument suggests that 'stories' of sexual initiation were both transfixed by the discursive truths of the modern psy-complex (e.g. sex as a tactic of becoming and knowing 'a self', the significance of self-esteem, etc.); *and* ideologically 'slanted' to reproduce conventionalized and valorized subject positions for teenage girls, such as abstinence from sex. Readers of Text 9 are cautioned about values – viz. 'before you begin to discuss sexual issues, be clear about your own values'; this moves along similar lines of thought as developmental psychological theorization on parental responsibility for valuational inscription of children in sexual pedagogies (see Chapter 3).

However, anxiety about values is reproduced in Text 9 through the lack of clarity about what values are (e.g. beliefs, opinions, judgements, bias, prescriptions, etc.); whose values they are; who decides; and how they might be applied non-prescriptively. For example, permission is granted, later on in Text 9, '[to tell your daughter that] *you think* children in high school are too young to handle the emotional consequences of sex' (my emphasis). The paradox of impelling clarity about 'your own values' and then inscribing mothers with the *loveLife*-line of 'clear thinking' [to *tell* daughters] is 'resolved' in a later section through attention to 'reliable sources of sexual information' (see Text 12 below).

Thus, readers are impelled – through doubt - to rely on experts, and to trust *Lovelines* as a source of objective information and sound, commonsensical values. However, this sexual curriculum for daughters is lacerated with competing truth claims, different sets of institutionalized knowledges about sexuality and sexual activity – as discourses - deployed alternately to prop up, discount or interrogate positions. The following discourses about sex operate in Text 9:

- *BIO-MEDICAL* discourse incorporates biological 'facts' about sex in the forms of anatomy, reproduction and contraception; diseases, risks of infection and risk-prevention (e.g. condom-use); treatment of illnesses and diseases; and advocacy of healthy-lifestyles to maintain wellness;
- *PSYCHOLOGICAL* discourses produce understandings of individuals in terms of their thoughts, emotions and behaviour, and the developing maturity of these capacities from childhood to adulthood; this would incorporate psycho-social

knowledges about communication skills, and what people 'need', emotionally, in sexual relationships, and any damaging consequences of thwarted needs;

- *SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH* discourses churn out incontestable evidence – like 'norms' and 'statistics' - about groups of people; positivist research uses survey questionnaires and structured interviews (mostly), and results from selected samples are generalized to the wider population;
- *SEXOLOGICAL* discourses have colonized safe-sex practice, incorporating an array of practical sex techniques and tactics to maximize safety and pleasure in penetrative and non-penetrative sex; also include applied communication and negotiation skills that relate to sexual situations/partners;
- *LEGAL* discourses refer to 'rights' of individual citizens – by constitutional law - to certain choices or freedoms that do not harm or violate others; and responsibilities for the custodial protection of minors by families, parents or guardians, including protection against sexual abuse or under-age sexual activity.
- *CULTURAL* discourses incorporate a range of values, like 'respect for elders', 'respect for women', or 'manliness', embedded in specific, localized activities and sites; and also religious / spiritual beliefs that regulate behaviour in particular ways (not mentioned in Text 9).

Thus, the maternal sexual pedagogy for teenage daughters in Text 9 over-determines discursive scaffolding of the preferred *abstinence*, or *not-now-but-later subject position* as follows. Abstract, biological information constructs her fecund female body as risky, and requiring protection (from boys); this is overlaid with HIV-vulnerability. Psychologically, according to pervasive storm-and-stress models of adolescence, she is not mature enough to deal with either the negotiation (with boys) about her needs, or the adult-transfiguration of the emotional aspects of sex (e.g. 'love' and 'intimacy'). Scientific scare tactics confirm her risk both from inadequate knowledge (e.g. 'common myths') and coercion from teenage boys (e.g. 'many of them think it's fine to force sex on a girl who's drunk or stoned'). Legally, she is protected (in principle) from coercive sex through the constitutionally decreed 'age of sexual consent' at 16 years; and paradoxically, the problems with enacting such 'principles' in daily sexual practice underscores her risk, immaturity and need for

custodial protection. She is subject to the extraordinary value – culturally – placed on her virginity, and thus, her sexual inexperience and unknowingness; and also labeling for transgression of this sexual code (e.g. 'slut').

### **Risky positional manoeuvres: abstinence versus real sex**

Text 9 deploys this layered sexual pedagogy – for mothers and daughters, subjectively and inter-subjectively – through a series of 'rhetorical questions'. These interrogations are represented (1) as issuing directly *from* the questioning daughter, as if she would speak them to a mother/reader, viz. 'How do I know when I'm ready to have sex?' They are also (2) issued *about* the risky daughter, seemingly to unsettle any complacency of mothers/readers, viz. 'Will she say 'no' or negotiate to use a condom?' Both representational tactics serve to anticipate such concerns within the 'open relationship' between mothers and daughters, and also to reproduce anticipatory anxiety and guilt for when such 'openness' inevitably fails (cf. Foucault, 1982).

Text 9 produces expert 'answers' to some of these questions, e.g. '*Tell her* she doesn't have to have sex to keep her boyfriend'; and leaves others 'open', thus requiring mothers/readers to fill in gaps with their own experiences, culturally appropriate knowledges and ways of speaking sex. This creates the impression of openness and 'democracy'; but it powerfully regulates how 'having sex' is defined, what sex means, and how sexual activity can (and cannot) be spoken, according to prevailing, conventionalized meanings. This marginalizes other subject positions, other ways to speak sex, deemed inappropriate for abstinent girls or their mothers.

For example, the *sexological discourses* that would transfigure the sexually abstinent position into knowing and *responsible safer-sex subject positions* for girls – and the libidinal and technical registers for speaking such sexual transformations into being – remain absent traces in Text 9. I refer here, and in the discussion that follows, to representations of condom-use. The either-or rules of condom-use are cloaked in biomedical discourse – no-condom-no-sex, or use one *every* time you have sex, including the first time – and are

obviously incorporated in this way into a maternal sexual pedagogy for daughters in Text 9. As I suggested in Chapter 3, in ages of HIV/Aids *and* gendered sexual violence epidemics in South Africa, abstinence is a risk-safer tactic for young women than 'negotiating' condom-use with apparently condom-averse men (cf. Heise, 1995).

But such either-or positions serve to reproduce prevailing biomedical constructions of sex firstly as penis-vaginal-penetration – 'hetero-normative reproductive sex' (Wilton, 1997) – as the only kind of sex that counts as adult-sex; and secondly, of sex as a source of risk/disease, rather than pleasure, or any other meanings. This construction disavows whatever sexualized activities abstinent girls might be participating in. Text 9 figures a teenage girl as 'finding herself in a sexually charged situation', and possibly because her rationality will be overwhelmed by either desire or coercion, she needs to (be helped to) 'think in advance about how she'll handle it' (cf. the co-regulation of 'teaching moments', above). The options that are figured maintain an abstinent subject position, as follows: 'say no', the safest bet; but, if 'yes' is said, then 'negotiate a condom', which is safe in principle, but tricky in practice, and no guidelines are given. There would seem to be a wide range of sexual activities, and intricate negotiations of these, that slip uneasily between these 'no' and 'yes, but...' poles (Patton, 1996; Thompson, 1990; Tonks, 1996; Wilton & Aggleton, 1991).

This is slippery health education territory and several tactics appear in the margins of Text 9. As I showed in Chapter 3, some sexual health activists have warned that parents are ill-equipped to prepare youth for the negotiations around safer forms of sexual activity in HIV/Aids epidemic (e.g. Tonks, 1996). This relates to parents' apparent lack of access to modern sexological discourses – out of prudishness, embarrassment or ignorance – that constitute knowledges about different forms of sexual activity, explicit safe-sex techniques to produce arousal or satisfaction, and interpersonal negotiation skills in sexual situations. It refers also to the limitations of what can be realistically achieved via mass media communication – to raise awareness and improve a broad base of knowledge. It refers to the unspoken (biomedical) registers of 'decency' that regulate sexual explicitness in public domain texts about sex for particular audiences – like *loveLife* youth programming or

*Fairlady* as a family-oriented women's magazine (Aggleton, 1989; Wilton, 1997). Thus, these kinds of critiques of mass mediated communication are associated with calls for participatory interventions that develop practical sexual decision-making, communication and 'sex negotiation' skills (see Chapter 4).

Elsewhere, another discourse on *universal-risk universal-precautions* is increasingly drawn on to challenge the libertarian-therapeutic technologies of talk – notably 'negotiation' and 'dialogue' – that conventionally accompany sexual practice in the context of an epidemic (e.g. Kelly et al., 2001; Patton, 1996). Negotiation and dialogue imply that there are *options* to be talked about with respect to risk-reduction every time a sexual act is performed – for example, to use condoms or not – and the recurrent possibility of 'not winning' the discussion, of compromise and of coercion, have unsafe consequences. Such activists advocate that risk-reduction is established as a normative culture of safer-sex practice; and that within such a regulative culture, risk-reduction is non-negotiable or non-dialogical. I will examine how this is appropriated within a youth-culture subject position in Texts 11 & 12 below.

The rehearsal in Text 9 that girls '[do] not have to have sex to keep [a] boyfriend' is articulated from interstices between legal and feminist discourses to protect girls from the dangerous possibilities of sexual coercion. The imperatives challenge systems of power in which women's 'rights' are overwritten by men's alleged sexual drives; and girls are impelled to re-position themselves to ward off exploitation and its potential health risks. However, such beneficent imperatives also produce regulative effects. The repertoire of meanings of 'sex' is policed, and multifarious reasons to 'be sexually active' closed. For example, girls within an abstinent subject positioning are emptied of desire and of volition to produce any other subjective, social or material effects that accrue from sex. That they may *want to* be sexually active with boyfriends, and indeed, want to 'keep a boyfriend' *with* sex, in whatever form, is disavowed. Girls are thus depicted – and reflexively position themselves – as unwilling participants in (unregulated) mutual masturbation, oral sex or thigh sex. This is not to trivialize sexual coercion; but a Foucauldian lens produces a view of



girls' power that shifts uneasily around inscription of sexual objectification, sexual experience, sexual knowledges, sexual desire, and registers for speaking sex with partners.

My aim in the analysis of Text 9, as sexual health education material for mothers and daughters, was to examine how prevailing discourses – biomedical, psychological, scientific research and cultural – invent the kind of 'sex' that appears in a curriculum for children, and also the register for speaking sex in the custodial relationship, in particular ways. The libidinal and technical registers of sexological discourses would threaten the authority and safety of sexual conversations between parents and teenagers. Following these lines, the next section briefly examines how the discursive *registers* – as codified styles of speaking - of condom-use and condom-negotiation are depicted in two sites which position adult women in the *Lovelines* series: as mothers of teenage daughters (TEXT 10, overleaf), and as sexual partners of men (TEXT 11, overleaf).

#### **Annabel's marginalized negotiation of condom-use**

Text 10 describes a kind of 'primal scene' between mothers and children; the discovery of a 'sign' or 'trace' – a condom in the pocket of a discarded jacket – of her 16 year old daughter's (assumed) sexual activity. Mothers' privileged position of surveillance over sexualized teenaged bodies works here, ironically, through her further domestic responsibilities for 'house-work'; the snooping through pockets of jackets as she hangs them up, the inspection of sheets or underwear while doing the family washing, the reading of hidden-away letters. The operations of such vigilant sleuthing for traces are poised uncomfortably within inscribed imperatives for 'open' and mutually trusting relationships between parents and teenagers. The mother figured in Text 10 is caught red-handed by readers – rather than by her daughter, Annabel - and she is impelled to transform her 'unexpected discovery' into a 'self-controlled', 'measured' and 'calm' response to save face; and also to save the situation of intrusiveness from potential accusations, defensiveness, embarrassment and conflict with Annabel. She achieves this through public confession to the daughter: writing her discovery and her assumptions of (protected) sex in a letter, which

### TEXT 10

*Lovelines 16: Fairlady, 8 November 2000, p. 117*

#### The beginning and the end of life <excerpt>

'Dear Annabel,' the note said, 'I found these condoms in your jacket pocket when I hung it up. I just wanted you to know that I'm proud of you for being responsible, and if you ever want to talk about anything, I'm here.'

This mother of a 16-year-old may be unusual in her calm response to her daughter's sexual activity, and in fact it took a lot of self-control and thought before she made this measured response to the unexpected discovery. Chances are, her daughter won't take her up on the offer to talk, but the door is obviously open.

Unfortunately, this is not the norm. Most parents seldom talk to their kids about sex. Teenagers most often learn about sex from an older sibling or from friends. And sex education in schools remains, for the most part, inadequate. One result is that one out of three babies in South Africa is born to a teenage mother.

### TEXT 11

*Lovelines 5: Fairlady, 7 June 2000, p. 75*

#### In love again... <excerpt>

AIDS has taken the thrill out of new relationships. A new sexual partner can spell danger, even death, so how do you protect yourself? Broaching the subject of safe sex can be daunting, but if your new partner won't protect himself, you'll have to take the initiative.

Karen (31), who recently left a 10-year relationship and is about to enter a new one, has a completely frank attitude. 'I won't consent to sex without a condom until he can show me a certificate stating his HIV-negative status,' she says, 'and he has every right to demand the same from me.'

Unfortunately, her attitude's still the exception. Studies show most women don't believe they're really at risk of HIV infection from 'decent young men'. They agree to unprotected sex, closing their eyes and shooting up a quick prayer. But with HIV infection increasing by 25 – 35 percent each year, everybody's at risk. As a woman, it's your right to demand protection from your new lover and if he refuses, to consider if he's really committed to a mutually respectful relationship. If a man's careless about protection, it's up to you to keep condoms – or female condoms – by your bedside or in your purse.

Demand for female condoms in South Africa is low, which means most women still leave it to the man to provide protection. Female condoms, sold as Care, Femidom or Reality, contain an efficient silicone lubricant and look rather like an extra-large male condom. They may not be the most natural, comfortable option, but they do give a woman the opportunity to take charge of contraception and protect her own health without having to ask permission from her male partner.

They can be inserted long before intercourse and are reusable, which cuts down on costs (from R8 a 2-pack, from chemists).

also bestows 'pride' for 'being responsible' and re-inscribes her availability 'to talk about anything'.

*Lovelines/Fairlady* readers might initially amuse themselves with imagining Annabel's fury at finding this letter (along with the forgotten, disused condom) in her pocket some months later. However, this written confession also achieves remarkable churnings of power relations and custodial positioning between mother and daughter. First, Annabel is positioned as a sexually knowing and responsible young woman, perhaps within a youth-culture subject position that inscribes 'informed choices' and 'safer sex' practice – clearly *not* the abstinent girl of the previous section. A condom in one's pocket is a different thing to using it during sex (see below), but the sexual *anticipation or intent* had been inscribed; as has the injunction to protect herself from risk.

Whatever conversations about sex have (or have not) happened between them, the mother's 'unexpected' discovery of the condom indicates that Annabel had neither sought nor needed her counsel regarding her imminent sexual activity – for whatever reason. Annabel's locus of knowledge, and the talking about sex she accomplishes, is deferred elsewhere. Her sexual negotiation with the prospective wearer of the condom is similarly relegated to the margins of Text 10. Readers are not privy to her transfiguration; no techniques or registers for speaking (safe) sex are permitted to appear. There is a trace here of that (previously mentioned) normative culture of safer-sex practice, where risk-reduction is liberated from the need for spiraling negotiation and dialogue. However, the trace is quickly countered. Annabel and her mother are inscribed as 'not the norm', which unleashes yet another textual opportunity to rehearse norms of HIV-infection amongst youth and unwanted teenage pregnancy that afflict *all* (other) girls, except Annabel.

Second, Annabel's transfiguration (or transgression) into a sexually responsible young woman, and her lack of willingness to seek her mother's custodial counsel, produce a crisis

of authority for the mother. Her confession to Annabel is of her failure as her custodian 'to know'; it asks Annabel to receive her confession, and gives her [Annabel] power to forgive. Forgiveness would perhaps involve Annabel's reciprocal disclosure of (protected) sexual activity; a re-inscription of intimacy with her mother. However, while she relinquishes her power as regulator of her daughter's sexuality – 'chances are, [Annabel] won't take her up on the offer to talk' – she retains her custodial gaze, overseeing the process of her becoming woman. She is thus able to confer her approval of her daughter's responsibility and autonomy, rather than to accuse her of 'being a slut'.

### **Karen's condom-demands get stuck**

While 16-year old Annabel's transition from abstinent girl to sexually volitional, condom-carrying young woman happens in the (not-the-norm) margins of Text 10, the 'typical' condom-predicaments of adult women entering 'new' sexual liaisons appear in full plane of sight in Text 11. This is not a pretty or heartening sight. In other literatures, sexually experienced women suggest that condom-negotiation with new (or multiple) sex partners is 'easier' – more explicit, technical, co-operative – than in longer term partnerships where scripts of sexual activity, embedded in conventionally gendered roles and styles of communication about sex, have been established (e.g. Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Patton, 1994; Willig, 1995; Wilton, 1997). This is borne out in South African explanations of the elevated risks of HIV-infection to women above 20 years, who are assumed to forgo/eschew condoms in established sexual partnerships (e.g. Parker & Kelly, 2003; Pettifor et al., 2004; Simbayi et al., 2004).

Yet, the adult women figured in Text 11 find 'broaching the subject of safe sex [with a new partner] daunting'; and further are depicted as lacking access to an effective discursive register with which to – inter-subjectively, erotically, technically, safely – dialogue sex with men. Different positions as speaking subjects within several discourses are tried out in Text 11. For example, the language of the *psy-complex* in 'commitment to a mutually respectful relationship' proves inappropriate where no intimate talking with partners happens; and trusting a higher power through 'shooting up a quick prayer [before unprotected sex]' (cf.

Strebel, 1992) within *cultural discourses*, appears ill advised within the prevailing discourses of risk. In both these instances, such speech is not directed at men partners in the form of dialogue, but towards the women themselves (cf. reflexive monologue), exposing their collusion with men in disempowering, damaging and unsafe relationships, and judging them harshly for this folly.

In the failure to converse openly with men in Text 11, women are figured as resorting to '*demand[ing]* protection from [their] new lover' (my emphasis); this articulated from within the interstices between bio-medical discourses on risk and legal discourses on 'rights'. Such 'demands' pivot on the pernicious figuration of 'scoundrel men' in the *Lovelines* series (see Chapter 6); and also on men's obstructive resistance to condoms, which appears here as an inexplicable, unreasonable and unjust bald-fact. The deployment of men's Grand Condom Refusal – that is, no condoms, ever, full stop – obscures the smaller micro-components that constitute 'condom-use'; each of which may provide opportunities for nuanced resistances towards condom-use, e.g. *when and where to talk* about risk without causing offence, *acquiring* condoms, *carrying* condoms, *technical know-how* and *experience* in use, *negotiating* use, flexibility in *trying out other* forms of safer sex activity and when to negotiate these, etc. (cf. Kelly et al., 2001).

Furthermore, condoms are commonly associated with conflict in sexual relationships; this owing to mistrust produced through perceived lack of commitment and faithfulness between partners (e.g. Willig, 1995, 1997). These and other localized anti-condom arguments are not displayed in Text 11,<sup>5</sup> and thus, cannot be anticipated and constructively engaged with by women/readers in risk-reducing ways in sexual conversations. *Lovelines/Fairlady* readers are positioned as having to be resigned to men's refusal, or to find other ways around it – to have sneaky safe sex *without* dialogue, without men noticing this (e.g. female condoms, vaginal microbicides: Parker, 2005a).

Karen's story in Text 11 is a case to point. Karen is figured as 'entering a new relationship', and staunchly withholding 'real' (latex-free) sex until her partner can 'show [her] a *certificate* stating his HIV-negative status'. He, apparently, 'has every *right to demand* the

same from [her]' (my emphases). This dubious partner selection strategy is based on scientific evidence of HIV-testing and draws its credibility from allegedly 'neutral' bio-medical discourse; and its assertion of *equal* 'rights to demand' from legal and feminist discourses. However, the kind of 'real condom-free sex' that is uncritically figured here pivots on deferral and/or avoidance in several powerful ways (cf. Patton, 1996).

Once dangerous HIV+ persons have been avoided as potential sex partners, it defers condom-use and safer-sex to other risk groups. The avoidance of condoms rejects the dual-protection they offer, in terms of HIV-transmission *and* contraception; thereby positioning women as additionally responsible for contraception through hormonal pills/injections. The clearance certificate of HIV-negative status disavows the liminality of HIV-test results, e.g. effects of window periods or non-monogamous events. Most crucially, it avoids any kind of inter-subjective sexual dialogue, any register for speaking sex beyond bio-medical risk, i.e. certificate displaces talk. The need for talking is apparently displaced if the 'safety' of each partner can be inscribed onto unprotected penetrative sex – ideologically taken-for-granted as (the only) 'real sex' and 'relationship'. The rights to refuse unprotected sex are renounced, and embarrassment or conflict avoided through bio-medically mediated compromise, in favour of men's condom-refusal.<sup>6</sup>

Partner selection and avoidance strategies stand in opposition to the universal-risk universal-precautions discourse, which figures everyone as HIV+, and foregrounds risk reduction as a form of normative responsibility and public compliance as adult citizens (Patton, 1996). Such discourses rely on explicit safer-sex techniques and registers for communication that shift negotiation from '*if*' to '*how*' condoms will be used. These sexological knowledges are, of course, marginalized in Text 11. As they were off limits in parent-child conversations about sex previously, so are they for adult women talking with sex partners in *Lovelines/Fairlady*. This reproduces conventionalized positioning of heterosexual adult women as 'reactive' sexual partners – responding to men's driving initiative.

But, here lies the rub in Text 11. Karen's 'completely frank attitude' is 'the exception' to the norm (cf. Annabel above). Men are simply uncooperative and stubborn. Feminist discourses

are appropriated in two seemingly contradictory ways to maintain credible subject positions to ward off risk. First, women/readers are re-inscribed with responsibilities to acquire and keep condoms in easily accessible places for use, viz. 'it's up to you to keep condoms by your bedside or in your purse'. It is unclear where the revolution is in this practice. No tactics are forthcoming for when power sticks and refusal extinguishes intentions. In other words, how do readers get these condoms from bedside tables, purses or pockets onto seemingly unwilling or undisciplined penises without men noticing?

Second, if this negotiation (inevitably) fails, women/readers are impelled to resort to female condoms. These are depicted as 'not the most natural or comfortable option', but they offer women opportunities 'to take charge' of their own health/safety, apparently (a) affordably, and (b) without having to talk to their partners about it, or (c) without having to elicit 'technical participation' from men during penetration. This achieves the subversive resistance of power's counter-stroke in principle – and constitutes politically correct feminist rhetoric – but a wary reader may wonder why women might bother to be sexually active under such 'uncomfortable' circumstances. It is also highly improbable that (even very shy) female condom-use would be 'undetected' by men during sex.

Paradoxically, Text 11's mothers who are 'stuck', who struggle to have safe and pleasurable sex with scoundrel men partners, operate as a new and powerful scare tactic to re-inscribe their responsibilities – as socializing agents of social change, and also as wounded healers – to talk with their children about sex and relationships. These adult sexual relationships are cast as figures of an outdated and unacceptable status quo; rendered hopeless and impotent by adult masculinity, which is taken-for-granted as neither challengeable nor malleable. *Lovelines/Fairlady* mothers are addressed then as the manufacturers of the *next* generation of adults; they are impelled to staunch the inevitable inter-generational cultural-transfer of values, and to inscribe – through open talking – more appropriate sexual subjectivities on the youth under their custodianship. This is a call to mothers to produce boys and girls who are subjectively and sexually '*different*' to their fathers and mothers (cf. Walkerdine et al., 2001). Such governmentality regulates 'safer' relationships as a long-term strategy for public

health and productivity of workers on a population-level, rather than remedying individual women's trouble with difficult men in the ordinary passage of a daily present.

My analysis of condom pedagogies in Texts 11 and 12 has unpicked how sexual knowledges appear and disappear when women are depicted in conversations about sex, either with teenage daughters or with sex partners. These conversations pivot on bio-medical discourses of sex; and emphasize risks – as scare tactics – to inscribe partner selection or avoidance rather than the pragmatic risk reduction techniques that would involve negotiation with assumed to be threatening or threatened male partners. I have argued that while such lacunae unsettle the surfaces of the sex-positive and sensible sexual discussions that sensitive, liberated modern women are expected to have with teenage children *and* with sex partners in a time of epidemic, they also serve spectacular functions for audiences.

These spectacular functions re-inscribe readers' (mothers') responsibilities to 'train' and 'discipline' youthful sexualities in a particular way – to fashion a more docile sexual citizenship in epidemic. The spectacular lacunae – publicized through mediated texts such as the *Lovelines* series – also perversely impel the layering of sexual dialogues from/with various sources. This includes young girls and mothers producing opportunities to talk about sex with friends, and to engage with other kinds of texts, knowledges and pedagogies, to fill in the gaps in their 'openness'. Still, information is presented as the key that will unlock sticky communication.

### 3. VALUING SCIENTIFIC TRUTHS

I argued in Chapter 6 that mediated, inter-textual knowledges about sex represent the constant deferral and slippage of truth-narratives in a post-modern 'information highway'. This produces competitive territories for what counts as 'the truth' about sexuality, sex and risk-prevention. Mothers are consistently positioned in the *Lovelines* series as the *corrective to incorrect or incomplete information* that children and youth receive from unreliable sources (notably from media and peers); as well as the socializing *inscribers of values* on their unruly charges. In TEXT 12 (overleaf), mothers are warned that 'the values [they] pass



## TEXT 12

*Lovelines 12: Fairlady, 13 September 2000, p. 89*

### Who tells the truth about sexuality? <excerpt>

The media are a powerful influence in shaping attitudes and values in society. If women are stereotypically portrayed in the media as subordinate sex objects, the consequences are profound. It's not only women who see the narrow and limited portrayals of their lives in almost everything from soap operas to hard news coverage. Naturally, editors and programme directors who influence content have political and social agendas of their own that can influence everything they publish or broadcast. Regulatory bodies like the Broadcast Complaints Commission and the Advertising Standards Authority also still largely reflect a traditional perspective on issues such as sexuality.

Looking for accurate information about sexual issues can be like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack – finding realistic role models is even harder. For young people who are coming to grips with their own sexuality, the images they see are often overblown, and the information they glean inaccurate. Of course, teenagers are media-literate and know the difference between *Melrose Place* and real life. But there's a shortage of local actuality programmes and dramas dealing with the reality of sexuality in South Africa. *S'camto* the teen sexuality documentary series on e.tv, was part of a *loveLife* initiative to fill this information gap. Last year's highly acclaimed drama series *Yizo Yizo* was also inspired by this shortage of information on sexuality. Printed information sources can be equally uneven. On top of this, sex and sexuality are often sensationalized – weird sex sells.

Thought-provoking material on sexual health can help to create a new openness about sexuality in our society. The international evidence is clear: open discussion of sex and sexuality and early sex education result in the delayed onset of sexual activity and sharp reductions in teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. The values you pass on to your children concerning sexuality and gender must be informed by accurate information and unbiased perspectives.

on to [their] children about sexuality and gender must be informed by *accurate* information and *unbiased* perspectives' (my emphases).

This means that readers are impelled to judge the relative accuracy of sexual information from various sources – that all information is not 'equally' accurate – and also discern distinctions between accurate information and their own values towards that information. But, if values are understood to be beliefs and attitudes that subjectively appraise the way things should be (Santrock, 2000, p. 410), what exactly are 'unbiased values'? In this concluding section, my analysis of Text 12 examines how suspicion and doubt is cast on

*sources* of information, and how uncertainty is resolved for readers/mothers through inscribing trust of the (allegedly ideology-free) 'international evidence' purveyed by *loveLife*.

### *LoveLife* tells the truth

Text 12 poses unsettling questions about the quality of information about youth sexuality, and offers a critique of 'accurate information' on the basis that appearance is deceptive. While modern teenagers are figured here as 'media-literate and know[ing] the difference between Melrose Place and real life', *Fairlady/Lovelines* mothers are positioned as not media literate, and so inscribed with vigilance about hidden agendas within mediated information. Inscribing (again) the centrality of the sign of sex to subjectivities and risk-safety, mothers are figured as engaged on an obsessive quest for accurate information about sex, and this is as difficult and hopeless as 'looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.' Clearly this produces a powerful opportunity for *Lovelines/loveLife* 'to fill this information gap' – in mediated information generally, and in *Fairlady* readers' knowledge in particular – and to inscribe their approach, and their values, as 'unbiased perspectives'. I'll examine the construction of suspicion about 'other' sources of information first, and then move to the valorization of *loveLife* as a branded, trustworthy source.

This section deploys a Foucauldian approach in examining how Text 12 sets up an interrogation of the credibility of the *source* from which/whom information emits. This is understood to pivot on the notion of expertise and scientificity (see Chapter 6), viz. *who* is entitled, and by *what institutional authority*, to speak truth (Foucault, 1972)? Criteria that count as truthful are established – here, authentic reflection of local realities, and scientific research – and a rival source may be discredited if found to be ideologically driven.<sup>7</sup> Such generalized judgement of the source deflects scrutiny from the information itself, as in the title of Text 12: '*Who* tells the truth about sexuality?' This notion of (critically) positioning sources – or *branding* information – will be extended in Chapter 8, in examination of appropriation of *Lovelines* as *loveLife* campaigning.

'Accurate information' initially appears in Text 12 as authentic depictions of 'real life'. In reviewing sources of mediated information, a conspiratorial plot is revealed (cf. Marxist ideology), where behind-the-scenes manipulation fashions 'real life' in terms of prevailing conventions and interests. This is depicted as duping media-consumers with *misrepresentations*, and offering them inaccurate subject positions. These tiers of surveillance and hidden regulation appear first as powerful *editors* and *programme directors* 'who influence content [and] have political and social agendas of their own'; and second as *regulatory bodies* (e.g. Broadcast Complaints Commission), which 'still largely reflect a traditional perspective on issues such as sexuality.'

In light of such ideological manipulation, suspicion about the *content* of information appears in several ways. (a) Women are represented as 'subordinate sex objects', thereby reducing positive role models for youthful audiences. (b) Information about sex is sensationalized for commercial gain, viz. 'weird sex sells'. (c) Truthful information about 'real life' might also be blocked to serve conservative agendas. Thus, there is an apparent 'shortage of *local* actuality programmes and dramas' on youth sexuality, where *local* (my emphasis) reflects authenticity of lived experience in South African contexts – as opposed to global or international material. Text 12 refers to *S'camto* (*loveLife* youth programme), and *Yizo Yizo* as 'filling the gap'. While these clearly constitute 'examples' rather than systematic review, they effectively marginalize the rival youth-targeted, multi-media, education-entertainment programming of *Soul City* and *Soul Buddyz*, which has been operational since the early 1990s in South Africa, and many others (see Coulson, 2002).

This representation of sources of information about 'real life' achieves a juxtaposition of ideologically suspicious sources that purvey 'traditional perspectives', against *loveLife's* apparent resistance towards ideological controls, and commitment to both truth-telling about sex and an altruistic public health agenda in 'creat[ing] a new openness about sexuality in our society'. The construction of *loveLife's* authority appears as a revolutionary modern liberation through 'accurate' information from repressive traditional pasts and traditional 'do or die' campaigning, and invention of a 'public space' in which sex can be freely dialogued (Parker, 2005a). Hence, *loveLife* is enabled to judge all resistance to its

campaigning – and the subject positions this invents for media-consumers and risk-prevention activists as audiences – as conservative of an outdated, and culturally inauthentic, sexual status quo.

Once ideology-freedom and local relevance have been established, Text 12 deploys the big scientific guns, viz. ‘the *international* evidence is clear’ (my emphasis). The ‘clear’ mono-causal universal-truth narrative that has inscribed the *Lovelines* series – ‘open discussion of sex and early sex education result in the delayed onset of sexual activity...’ etcetera - is rehearsed again. For an audience of *Fairlady* mothers the imperative of such ‘international evidence’ produces contradictory subjective effects. First, the authority and truthful principles of such information is inscribed, based on its objective distanciation from local conditions. This speaks to the ‘medicalization’ of morality through which contemporary sexuality in an age of epidemic is regulated (Watney, 1994; Singer, 1993). Here, the institutionalized power of ‘First World’ western science produces anticipation of tactics to control the uncontrollable (youth sexuality) in South Africa.

Second, the detachment of such truthful prescriptions from ‘real life’ family circumstances may harden parental recalcitrance to talking about sex with children. This would produce ‘unconvinced’ reader-positions, or further, transgressive or dismissive reader-positions based on oppositional values (e.g. religious beliefs about parenting and sexual practice). But values are *not* simply inscribed through the power of science with which *loveLife* aligns itself. Subjective surfaces are always already lacerated with other positions that argue back and resist consent. These ideas are extended in Chapter 8, where parents discourse parenting.

For risk-prevention-research audiences, *loveLife*’s competitive construction of itself as the truth-teller about sex, and as the *only* viable mass-mediated health-promotion initiative for youth and parents is tantamount to a declaration of war (cf. Parker, 2005b). The battle lines are drawn in Text 12 through establishment of criteria for truth - viz. local relevance and scientific research – but the battle itself is marginal. Rival interpretations pivot on unraveling the construction of *loveLife*’s multi-million rand monopoly on, and manipulation of, mediated information about youth sexuality. These knowledge-production critiques emit

from media and cultural studies departments in universities, skeptical health journalists and health-education activists; and claim to expose the 'ideological spin' of *loveLife*'s campaigning (e.g. Coulson, 2002; Parker, 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Posel, 2004; Thomas, 2004).

My analytic approach to truth-claims in the *Lovelines* series is more sanguine in its broader theoretical understanding of the politics of knowledge-production, representation and 'persuasion' of a particular audience of (classed, gendered) subjects. This is not a position of relativism, as much as how 'truthful' information is constituted (or made to appear true), and operates discursively through subject positioning. In the context of sexual knowledges in an HIV/Aids epidemic, this means that all 'facts' are manufactured in particular conditions, and mobilized for particular purposes – to *do* and *speak* particular things. They do not operate from 'cool spots' on the outside of discourse/s. I have tried in this section to capture such a context of use of 'facts' in Text 12. I have avoided listing – and contesting – every apparent error, *misrepresentation* or lack of contextual caveat in the *Lovelines* series (e.g. Parker, 2003, 2005a, 2005b). Mine was an interpretive argument about how such representations operate in text-audience relationships, rather than an attempt to correct science with better science, and thereby liberate truth.

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<sup>1</sup> See discussion in Chapter 4. The baseline research on which such claims were made could not be traced (cf. Parker, 2003). The follow-up evaluation of 3 years of campaigning, the *2001 National Youth Survey of South African Youth (loveLife, 2002c)*, produced ambivalent findings on parental and youth willingness to talk to each other about sex.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, 'gangster language', a hybrid linguistic variant of urban, working class, black South Africans – street slang from African townships in Gauteng- inflected by Afrikaans, largely satirizing (white) Afrikaans-speaking shift bosses on the gold mines (Marlin-Curiel, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> A similarly critical argument is forwarded about skewed racial representation in *Yizo Yizo*, a edutainment drama series about youth risks (Smith, 2003) – that is, that it lacks locally appropriate subjective positions as 'hooks' with which to interpellate/persuade its racially divided audience. *Yizo Yizo* (literally 'like this, like this') was mentioned in Text 6 as comparative, competitive health education programming for youth.

<sup>4</sup> Media effects on children – particularly through televised exposure to violent and sexually explicit images - is troubled ideological territory. See Durkin (1995) for a sensible review of various positions on parent-mediation effects; and others for Americanized, somewhat hysterical perspectives on risks and damages (e.g. Nathanson, 2001; Singer, Flannery, Guo, Miller & Leibbrandt, 2004).

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<sup>5</sup> These include the stock condom-averse rhetoric of 'showering with a raincoat on' or 'eating a sweet with a wrapper on'; but also some local swerves, such as Zulu-men's preference for 'nyama-nyama sex', literally meaning 'meat to meat' or flesh-to-flesh sex (Harrison, Xaba & Kunene, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> This is an uneasy positional trade-off of Foucauldian power; rather like Hollway's (1984a) subject positioning of women within permissive discourse as having sexual drives/needs equal to men's fictional ones (in male sex drive discourse).

<sup>7</sup> This articulates a realist, or Enlightenment position on scientific knowledge – that the objective rationality and positivist-empiricism of science is antithesis of ideology, and offers progressive approximations of truth as emancipation (Dews, 1987; see also Habermas, 1989).

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## CHAPTER 8

### APPROPRIATIONS OF LOVELINES – PARENTS DISCOURSE TALK-ABOUT-SEX WITH CHILDREN

#### 1. READING PARENTAL TALK

##### Reader/subject positions, and positioning

This chapter about ‘consuming texts’ examines parents’ appropriation of mediated advice – from *Lovelines* - about communication with their children about sex. As such, it carries the considerable weight of counterpoint, and of ‘talking back’. The hegemonic alliance between discourses of the psy-complex (in terms of regulating mothering and adolescence), and public health and epidemiological science (in terms of regulating risk of HIV/Aids) - and proliferated through mass media targeting women - has been understood as a pivotal strategy of government (cf. Dean, 1999; Rose, 1992, 1993, 1996). This discursive confluence of subjective beneficence and risk prevention required particular kinds of maternal and adolescent subjects to step forward (cf. Dean, 1994a), and fabricated ‘communication’ and ‘family’ in particular classed/colonial and gendered ways (Mills, 1996; Rose, 1990).

My close textual and discourse analyses in Chapters 6 and 7 have tracked subject positioning through *Lovelines*’ textual, rhetorical, discursive and ideological practices of persuasion. A multiplicative force field of subject positions, and the relations between them, appeared; but this multiplicity only framed alternatives and resistance as problematical, to relentlessly push subject positioning towards the docile directions of preferred meanings and actions. The glimpses of motherly communication offered in *Lovelines* were staged to perform such normalization, surveillance and disciplinary power. This chapter changed tack, and asked groups of Southern African parents to read and talk about a *Lovelines* text, in relation to parenting practices they experienced with their own parents, and deploy with their own children. This ‘contextualized’ *Lovelines*-pedagogy within (a) the locally lived micro-relations of ‘real family-life’ (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), and (b) the minutiae of

inter-subjective manoeuvrability in conversations about its appropriation (Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This produced opportunities for exploration both of the power of normative meanings of mothering and risk-safety, and their situated and sustained contestation.

Allred (1996a) found – in her conceptualization of resistances to childrearing advice from experts – that resistant parental readings were produced through disidentifications with subject positions proffered by dominant discourses; through driving wedges between ‘idealized’, psy-complex positions, and ‘real’ childrearing experiences in families. Her maternal subjects negotiated ‘expertise’ through complex interstices between competing discourses on childrearing (e.g. cultural, religious, psychoanalytic, feminist discourses). This work of negotiation becomes rather more fraught where HIV/Aids risk has become coupled to ‘inappropriate’ childrearing, as in talking about sex with children in the *wrong* way. This chapter reviews aspects of positioned appropriation of *Lovelines* by parents; and it marks (partial) persuasions and against-the-grain resistances, not as a source of either interpellation or liberating escape, but as swarming individualized tactics of manoeuvre in self-making.

This thesis has used Fairclough’s 2<sup>nd</sup> CDA model as a spine to interconnect layers of examination of textual, discourse and socio-cultural practices. Fairclough’s (1995a) examination of *discourse practices* weaves together the productive operations of text production, distribution and consumption. This means that media texts are produced, pitched and distributed with particular audiences of ‘consuming subjects’ in mind.<sup>1</sup> Fairclough’s (1992) examination of practices of text consumption coheres around the principle of ‘*coherence*’. A ‘coherent text’ is one whose constituent parts and preferred positions are encoded so that the text ‘makes sense’ even though there may be ‘relatively few formal markers’ of this coercive sense making, and ‘relatively little explicit cohesion’ (p. 83). Thus, coherence is not simply a property of texts themselves; it operates via assumptions and inferences as discursive ‘leaps of faith’, as properties of reading and readers, viz. ‘a text only makes sense to someone who makes sense of it, someone who is able to infer preferred meanings’ (p. 84).



The ways in which a coherent, preferred reading is generated for a text speaks then to the ideological and rhetorically persuasive work of interpellation of subjects through the positions it displays, closes down, transmutes and advocates. Readers are subjected by and to the text to the extent that they make the preferred links within the text's components and positions, and to their own lived experience; and take up proffered positions, even partially. Of course, the febrile power of such disciplinary subjectification never totally succeeds or totally fails (Foucault, 1978). There is always possibility of struggle over different readings of texts, and resistances to multivalent subject positions set up in texts (Fairclough, 1992).

Furthermore, depending on the contexts of text consumption, preferred readings can operate in 'conventionalizing' or 'creative' ways, either maintaining normative meanings or contesting them (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 55). The contexts of consumption of media texts – here, women's magazines in general, or *Fairlady* and *Lovelines* in particular – are multiple. As I suggested in Chapter 1, reader reception studies have shown such texts to be routinely consumed in the domicile of the family cell, but with various degrees of attention and interactivity with others, and for various purposes other than simply absorbing 'information' proffered, e.g. entertainment, ridicule, nothing better to do, etc. (e.g. Ballaster, et al., 1991; Coward, 1984; Hermes, 1995; McRobbie, 1991, 1994; Winship, 1987). The aim of Fairclough's (1992) CDA examination of coherence is 'reader research' around a 'communicative event' – how do *particular* readers interpret (or talk about) a *particular* text? This is guided by analytical questions, as follows (p. 233):

- How heterogeneous and how ambivalent is the text for particular readers, and consequently, how much inferential work is needed?
- Does the text produce resistant readings, and if so, from what sort of reader?

Fairclough's (1992) broad rules of thumb for textually oriented discourse analysis – (1) code the corpus in summarizing terms, (2) scan for discursive features, (3) select a few extracts for detailed analysis – scaffold this process of examination. With regards inter-subjective positioning of readers in interactive group discussion material, Fairclough's rules are revealing with regards extract-selection. To yield insight into the contribution of discourse/s to the social practice under scrutiny, he suggests focus on 'moments of crisis' (p. 230); this

## Group discussions as apparatuses of capture

The 'talk' that constitutes the object of analysis in this Chapter was produced through group discussions with a range of parents and teachers, who read and discussed – as acts of 'consumption' – a particular text as stimulus material. The specificity of this purpose needs brief contextualization within the burgeoning how-to literature on 'focus group interviewing'. The roots of focus group interviewing as a 'research technique' are customarily found in the domain of market research, investigating product/text reception by consumers relative to their 'needs' and 'behaviours', in order to improve efficacy of marketing tactics, products and service (e.g. Fontana & Frey, 2000; Millward, 2000; Willig, 2001). The call to deploy such technology in (qualitative) social scientific inquiry is historically fairly recent (e.g. Morgan & Spanish, 1984). Since then, the uses of focus group interviewing have proliferated in a range of applied psychological studies.<sup>3</sup>

The exponential increase in the social scientific use of focus group technology has produced a plethora of manuals on the practice of focus groups, prescribing in the name of quality and rigour the do's and don'ts of sampling strategies, group constitution and size, 'structuring' discussion, moderator styles, and (thematic) analysis of focus group material (e.g. Ferreira & Puth, 1988; Greenbaum, 1998; Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1993). Such manuals take a pragmatic rather than theoretical approach to focus group interviewing as a technique – and a realist approach to language<sup>4</sup> – thereby perpetuating the advantages (to qualitative positivists mostly) of obtaining large amounts of 'data' quickly, cost effectively, and reliably due to the moderating audience of other participants. A further advantage is the positioning of focus group interviewing as an exploratory pilot step towards generating breadth of ideas, issues and angles; this 'data' is then put to work in fabrication of more sophisticated, truth-catching fishing nets (cf. Krueger, 1994).

A tangential development in the praxis of focus group technology is captured in a differently focused manual on group or organizational processes. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) define focus group interviewing as 'discussions', where 'group dynamics, and the conduct of the group as well as the interpretation of the results obtained must be understood within the

context of the group interaction' (p. 7). This use of discussion emphasizes *group process*, the way people communicate with one another, and the *content/issue* around which interaction is organized through focal stimuli (Willig, 2001). Here, freed of positivist concerns about quality and rigour, group discussions may stand as objects of examination in their own right, with their truths situated within the contours of particular group processes. Such principles resonate within approaches – like Grounded Theory, Activity Theory or Memory Work, for example – where ongoing discussions are framed as forms of iterative engagement with and sustained analysis of participants' experiences and sense making (Willig, 2001).

The turn to language has of course transmuted attention to underlying group process into examination of dialogue and conversation, as in discourse analytic examination – from various perspectives – of the negotiation of subject positions through interactive talk (e.g. Bevan & Bevan, 1999; Davies & Harre, 1990; Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Hollway, 1989; Stenner, 1993; Wetherell, 1998). Such dialogue is generated through focus group technology to produce spontaneous, (seemingly) 'natural', *and* relevant to the topic at hand, conversation (Puchta & Potter, 1999); with the explicit intention of subjecting it to a particular kind of (theoretical) reading of language-construction. These uses of discussion-technology often issue cryptic instrumental tactics for the capture of 'talk', which masks the positioning work involved in adapting focus groups to particular purposes, questions, contexts and kinds of participation/discourse (Puchta & Potter, 2004). The discourse analytic uses of focus group technology inscribe such talk with several assumptions that can (inadvertently) mask contexts of production of that talk, and can veer towards naturalism.

For example, discussants are assumed to share communicative resources that reproduce all dialogue as 'performative' and/or 'adversarial' sites where speakers will – willy-nilly, and wittingly or not – take up, account for, defend, resist and challenge 'positions' (e.g. Bevan & Bevan, 1999; Fontana & Frey, 2000); or even that focus group dialogue should resemble interaction with peers 'outside the research context' (Willig, 2001, p. 29). The conditions and contexts that make such performative, adversarial or 'natural' conversations possible should be unpacked (cf. Wetherell, 1998); and it is to this that I now turn.

The focus group discussions that are analyzed in this chapter were (conveniently) produced in a South African university curriculum, during 2001. In an inter-disciplinary, postgraduate module on research methodologies, I facilitated several seminar-workshops on interviews, discussions and discourse analytic strategies. These 'senior' students had established careers as schoolteachers, or academicians in the university, and needed 'research skills' for furthering education via dissertations. All students (44 in total) participated in discussions, either as facilitators of groups or discussants, as part of the workshop-component. Inscribed by my research interests, these groups discussed 'sex education in the home', and variations in stimulus material, degrees of 'structure' and moderator styles produced wildly disparate talk. As an initial screening strategy, I selected the five group discussions facilitated by myself, because each of these multifarious dialogues was anchored through collective 'interpretations' of a particular text from the *Lovelines* series – *Straight Talk* (*Fairlady*, 5 July 2000, p. 156).

As I suggested above, Fairclough (1992) has drawn attention to the subtle interplay – in practices of text consumption, interpretation or coherence – between (a) the *text* itself, as a particular set of 'traces' and 'cues'; (b) the *reader's resources* that are brought to text processing, e.g. socio-structural positioning, orders of discourse, conventions of consumption constituted through past discourse practice and resistance, etc.; and (c) the *context of interpretation* in which they are embedded, that produces resources for readings considered normative, playful, oppositional, acquiescent, etc. (p. 80). I will briefly map the praxes for these three interconnected aspects, which set up the conditions for particular conversations to happen.

(a) Text: *Lovelines' Straight Talk*

The selection of a particular *Lovelines* text for discussion in these groups – *Straight Talk* (*Fairlady*, 5 July 2000, p. 156; see full text in Chapter 7, or Appendix 1) – captured the web of threads that fabricate this thesis in at least two ways. Firstly, attention to a single text focalized discussion (to some extent) within and between groups. The participants were asked to read this didactic text against their own situated experiences of childrearing (and

risk), as children and as parents. This tactic is aligned with media reception studies that used specific focal material to generate direct/interactive interpretations and appropriations (rather than asking about 'spontaneous recall' of media products).<sup>5</sup> For example, McRobbie (1981, 1982, 1991) used issues of '*Jackie*', a youth magazine, as texts for discussion among groups of British working class girls (cf. group discussion methods: Ang, 1991; Hermes, 1995; Radway, 1987). This tactic is intended to produce adversarial discussion as a site of struggle over positions, interpretations and meanings of the *same* text; and labours as '*aide-memoire*'. Hermes (1995) notes that vague, abstract, rambling and disconnected talk on disparate topics resulted from asking group participants to generate their own examples of mediated texts that were influential or problematic in the practice of their daily lives.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, this *Straight Talk* text was analyzed (by myself) in Chapter 7; and this reflexive looping back here produced an inter-textual counterpoint, a different angle or layer, to that prior Foucauldian reading of psy-complex normalization. This imbrication happened in the process of writing rather than being prefigured as an intentional design blueprint.

**(b) Readers/talkers: parents, teachers and 'the childfree'**

Focus group technological lore stipulates that, depending on the research question/s, sampling may constitute focus groups as homogenous *or* heterogeneous; along pre-existing lines of acquaintance *or* against these (with 'strangers'); and as having a subjective stake in subject matter *or* as naïve/oblivious to it (Willig, 2001, p. 29-30). So much for binaries then; my convenience sampling enacted all six strategies simultaneously. The five group discussions under examination involved 18 talkers who bore some superficial subjective marks of homogeneity. They were postgraduate students and professional teachers, of various sorts. Even the (two) participants who positioned themselves as 'childfree' – thereby refusing parental inscription - demonstrated considerable subjective stake in interpreting the text, rather than being naïve or oblivious to interpellation. Such is the discursive enmeshment of resistance (Alldred, 1996a; Foucault, 1978).

Beneath these similar surfaces, deeper socio-structural and discursive schisms inevitably appeared between women and men; between mothers, fathers and the childfree; between postgraduate students and academicians; between affiliations to various 'African' nationalities (South African, Namibian, Tanzanian); between 'races', and various complicated shades of traditional acculturation (Xhosa, Tswana, Herero) and social class in between. These heterogeneities were strategically mixed across groups, particularly in spreading men and academicians around; although this strategy was sometimes happily defeated (see 5<sup>th</sup> group, below). The sizes of the groups ranged from two to five participants.

**(c) Reading contexts: situated interactions**

The context of reading *Straight Talk* and talking-about-it was constituted through its insertion into a postgraduate module on research methodology; and as such was set up through my seminars, and inscribed with my own research interests and discourse analytical writing, with which some participants were familiar. The scaffolding of discussions within this university context produced several significant ruptures from 'natural discourse', in the sense of fabricating interactive talk about media consumption, reflexive criticality and occasional (rather than normative) adversarial interactive positioning.

Firstly, while 'students' were possibly acquainted with one another as a result of registration for this module, academicians in a small university/town were colleagues, and sometimes friends. Such prior relationships inevitably established familiarity, trust and irritation in ways that facilitated 'sparring' and 'ribbing' in discussions, rather than simply 'disclosure' (cf. Hollway, 1989) – usually along the seams of power of university hierarchies. I examine an instance of this positioning below. For reasons of 'anonymity', I have used pseudonyms in the extracts that follow, withheld biographical descriptions and changed some details of subjective reference. Marking racialized (or acculturated) positioning, while offensive, was integral to a post-colonial argument about 'modernizing' class mobility, as in sex communication 'becoming white/r' (cf. Stoler, 1995). It is the 'positioning talk' about text consumption that is under scrutiny rather than presenting speakers as evidence of individuality or representivity of category-membership.

Secondly, the setting up of this intellectual context of group-reading/talking ruptures the so-called preferred relationship between encoding and decoding (cf. Hall, 1980). Media communicative events – like the *Straight Talk* text – are ‘monologues’ that might mimic or inform interaction, but are distributed for individualized reader-text engagement in the home (Fairclough, 1995a). My deployment switches consumption into an interpretive context of collectivity, interaction, dialogue, and possibly, oppositional positioning towards persuasion – thus, ‘re-contextualizing the discursive event’ (p. 41); and also switching the targeted category of social subjects who apparently read such texts. It is never implied in my analysis that the ‘*Fairladies*’ targeted for text consumption (see Chapters 5, 6 & 7) would read or talk about *Lovelines* like these groups did. Only three (white) women who participated in the five group discussions under analysis admitted to having read a *Fairlady* magazine before; none of these had noticed *Lovelines* within its depths/shallows.

## 2. MEDIA DISCOURSES ABOUT PERSUASION

### ‘Positioning’ *Straight Talk*

The close reading task involving *Straight Talk* in all of the five group discussions produced elaborate ‘situation’ of the text within its mediated context – for example, as branded *loveLife* material – in order to discern aims, the slant and reach of messaging and tactics of persuasion in their own assessment of its ‘efficacy’ in informing and/or changing parenting practices. Such critical appropriations were clearly constituted in intentioned intellectual interactions between various parental, pedagogical and media-literate subjectivities. EXTRACT 1 captures various attempts to ‘position’ *Straight Talk* in order to produce against the grain readings of it.

#### **EXTRACT 1** [from FGD 1]

- 1 Nokothula: I didn’t know this [*Straight Talk* text] was *loveLife*.
- 2 Abigail: Look here [*loveLife* icon], *loveLife* talk about it.
- 3 Jay: What is *loveLife*? [Laughter] [...] Is it like the ABC campaign? [Laughter]

4 Abigail: No, no nothing like the ABC campaign, or it's the ABC with only condoms.  
 5 They've left out abstinence and the be... be what's it, be monogamous. So it's just  
 6 condomize, a strictly get it on condom campaign. [...]  
 7 Nokothula: But it says here *Fairlady*, it's that magazine, *Fairlady*.  
 8 Lindy: It was written by *loveLife* and it appeared in *Fairlady* magazine so it could be read  
 9 by mothers.  
 10 Toto: For the mothers that read such a magazine.  
 11 Lindy: Yes.  
 12 Toto: That's white, white mothers.  
 13 Lindy: Mostly white, but not only.  
 14 Nokothula: I did not know this was *loveLife*. I didn't see this small thing [icon]. That is  
 15 how the media tricks you.  
 16 Lindy: How does the media trick you?  
 17 Nokothula: It gives information, and then afterwards you see that this information is  
 18 wrong or it is part of the information not all. I will not trust it to tell me how I must raise  
 19 my daughters. I will not trust *loveLife* information for this. They have done many many  
 20 things that are... They are very wrong. They put a big picture [billboard] outside of the  
 21 school in Flagstaff for everyone to see, two black children kissing and they say 'wrap it  
 22 or zip it, *loveLife*' [laughter]. These are English words that mean nothing in my culture,  
 23 in Xhosa we don't say such things, wrap it or zip it [laughter], and people laugh because  
 24 it has no meaning or they become upset because it always means sex, sex, sex.  
 25 Abigail: Ja, I think that is part of the trickery of *loveLife*, the ideological control in the  
 26 sense that every parent just knows and dreads that their kids, however young they are, are  
 27 going to have sex and there's no doubt about that and people are scared of Aids. What  
 28 parents have to do is try and stop their kids from having sex, that's the point of it, even  
 29 when they're all open and cosy about it, talking nicely and everything. The job of parents  
 30 is to stop their kids from having sex [laughter], isn't that true? If you think of this  
 31 situation [in *Straight Talk* text], is the mother telling the daughter how fantastic sex is in  
 32 her own experience so the daughter is going to rush out and get condoms and try it out?  
 33 Nokothula: She will not do that, no never.

This kind of situating-discussion is significant for the multifarious reading tactics and subject positions that follow in this chapter. As an opening gambit in a heterogeneous group of intersecting parental, disciplinary, national and acculturated subjectivities, Extract 1 demonstrates the demarcation of a 'territory' for critical analysis. This territory and these tools underscore the importance for the establishment of common ground between discussants, to deflect possible inter-subjective contestation later on. Thus, they may appear to consensually disagree with the text, and not disagree with one another's childrearing confessions. Such scaffolding exposes *loveLife*'s 'brand' of information through its signature (e.g. for Nokothula: lines 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 14 & 15), and caricatures *loveLife*'s aims for those unfamiliar with them (e.g. for Jay: lines 3-6; and lines 25-32). This inter-subjective task



framing *loveLife* in Extract 1 is fraught with over-generalization, but reveals an incisive sense of such a campaign's contradictions: *loveLife* is cast as a 'strictly get it on condom campaign' (lines 3-6), that is about 'sex, sex, sex' (line 24) and 'open and cosy talking' (line 29); but it is simultaneously impelling parents to 'stop kids from having sex' (line 28). Foucault (1978) would certainly approve of this incitation *and* prohibition of children's sexuality.

The contextualization of *Straight Talk* as a media text powerfully opens spaces for resistant positioning towards hegemonic and normalizing discourses around childrearing, sexuality and risk. Knowledges – or suspicions – about 'media misrepresentations' and 'media tactics' provide the edges, wedges and hedges for contestation of *loveLife*'s advocated positions or 'preferred readings'. These set up ways in which these readers as subjects may include or exclude themselves, one another and others from the operations and effects of various regimes of normalizing truth about risk (cf. Alldred, 1996a). In powerful ways then these readership/subject positions function as ways in which these talkers may claim to see *beyond* or see *more* than the text; they position themselves as privy to media's partiality and manipulation of childrearing-truth, and not duped by this as ordinary others might indeed be. In these ways they disavow media's - and expertise's - power of interpellation of them as subjects. This does *not* mean they escaped inscription by dominant psy-complex or risk-proofing dicta on sex-talk with children (see below).

Several of these tactics are introduced in Extract 1 and will be tracked in more detail in the sections below. For example, Toto, who as an African, Xhosa-speaking father, asserts – via talk of the limited target audience or explicitly racialized reach of *Fairlady* magazine for 'white, white mothers' (line 8) – that *Straight Talk* might be read as biased, and irrelevant or non-applicable to other acculturated or raced audiences. This text is positioned then as (a) representing white mothers' interests and experiences with children, and *excluding* black mothers; and/or as (b) targeting white mothers with information about healthy parenting practices and risk-safety, and *excluding* black mothers. Such talk of racialized discrimination powerfully disavows the premises of *Straight Talk*'s interpretability (see class-based access to media, below); and also inter-subjectively challenges my selection – as

white academician - of such 'white, white' material for discussion in the heterogeneously raced group. I moderated the indictment through offering qualifying defense of *Fairlady's* audience of mothers, and the race of these mothers ('*Mostly* white, but not *all*', line 13). We were apparently saved from this sticky, racial moment by Nokuthula's topic change (line 14); but not quite.

### Media trickery: ideological interpellation and rhetorical persuasion

Nokothula's position on media-trickery dismisses *Straight Talk's* credibility as a source of trustworthy information on childrearing on the basis of other, undermining or intervening *loveLife* campaigning – here, outside media (billboards) with 'wrap it or zip it' condom-messaging (lines 17-24). As I argued in Chapter 4, the *loveLife* billboard campaign – due to its visibility above other media clutter – attracts attention in a way that undercuts other *loveLife* messaging (Delate, 2001). Here, Nokothula finds this branded billboard campaigning to be confusing, misleading, irresponsibly placed outside a school, and culturally inappropriate. Nokothula also identifies gaps in the expertise of *Straight Talk* – 'this information is wrong or it is part of the information not all' (lines 17-18). It is into these gaps that her acculturated mothering practices, situated as (African and/or) 'Xhosa', might usefully fit, or slip and fail. The rupture of differences along seams of culture, race, and social class inscribes much of my analysis of talk about text consumption and childrearing practices in this Chapter.

Abigail's appropriation of Nokuthula's media-trickery position extends the lack of *persuasiveness* of rhetorical tactics to a more pervasive and conspiratorial machination of 'ideological control' of *all of us* as reading subjects (see lines 25-32). Here, the particular constructions mobilized by *loveLife* in *Straight Talk* of prurient children's sexuality, and of brute 'scare tactics' about risk ('people are scared of Aids'), are read as impelling, coercing and inscribing 'right' parental action ('the job of parents is to stop their kids from having sex'). The laughter that greets the (unmasked) 'truth' of such a reading (line 30) perhaps heralds a 'moment of crisis' or ideological dilemma; but it is not pursued, except by way of apparent agreement on motherly restraint of children's sexuality (line 33). *LoveLife* would

certainly approve of this 'penetration' of their messaging, because David Harrison (2002b), CEO of *loveLife*, consistently reiterates a messaged intention to *delay* youth sex activation; and *not* only, or not strictly, a condomization endeavour (see Chapter 4).

Rather than this ideological media-trickery position being understood as ineffective messaging via outright refusal, Fairclough (1995a) distinguishes between ideological and persuasive aspects of media texts (see Chapter 1). According to this distinction, ideological aspects of media 'are not usually *adopted*, but are taken-for-granted as common ground between text-producer and audience' (p. 45, original emphasis). This might involve, for example, an understanding of the 'social good' inherent in particular parenting practices, of protecting children from risk, or of maximizing their potential for healthy development. My reviews in Chapters 1, 4 and 5 noted the naïve (Marxist) reductionism in reading such ideological interpellation as media-complicity with large scale political manoeuvring to push dominant-group economic or other institutional interests; and of audiences of subjects being unilaterally 'duped' by these.

From a Foucauldian perspective then, such ideological work is the stuff of subjectification and government. Hence, Fairclough (1995a) prefers to focus on the *persuasive* aspects of media: how a text/event adopts a perspective and 'uses rhetorical devices to persuade an audience to see things this way too' (p. 45); and how readers actually 'read' and appropriate such interpellation (p. 47). Fairclough's position – which I have adopted throughout this thesis – acknowledges that media texts (might) function ideologically in social regulation; but that this work of government is effected through their persuasive function as informing wellness and/or entertaining commodities in a competitive market; and as constituting (changing) cultural values about identities and relationships.

Given the inscribing influence on my thinking of Stoler's (1995) postcolonial re-reading of Foucault's (1978) *History of Sexuality*, much of the review of resistant reading tactics that follows – resisting *persuasion* rather than *ideological hailing* – maps the uneasy relationship between positions within the normalizing limits of childrearing, sexuality and risk-prevention from western psy-complex discourses (as an advocated 'ideal'), and the

(occasional) insurrections and subjugations of so-called 'cultural' and/or 'gendered' discourses (as recalcitrant realities). My meta-reading of reading tactics skims the following treacherous territory, a journey that obviously obscures other resistances located along the way,<sup>7</sup> and elsewhere, viz.

3. Cultural essentialisms: limits of persuasion
4. Parents know best: cultural diversity, local practices, normalization
5. The classing gaze in post-apartheid
6. Preaching to the converted: then-and-now constructions and youth responsabilization

### 3. CULTURAL ESSENTIALISMS: LIMITS OF PERSUASION

#### 'In my culture...' constructions

The 'in my culture' constructions in **EXTRACTS 2, 3 and 4** below are familiar in discourse on 'differences' between groups of people in South Africa; and of course, have a long colonial genealogy of racialization, exoticization, and discriminatory exclusion – as well as appealing to a sense of 'naturalness' (Spiegel & Boonzaier, 1988). The stories about traditional African culture in these extracts are imbued with authenticity and authoritative power as told by Xhosa-speaking women from rural peasant backgrounds. These stories constitute via discourses of cultural essentialism the immutability of traditional African cultural practices of family life - around for example, (pre-nuclear) 'extended networks' of child custody, 'authoritarian' childrearing styles that inscribe compliance through corporal punishment, 'taboo' regarding communication about sex between children and parents, and the extraction of 'payment' (as child-support or bride-price) by the family of an impregnated girl from the family of the impregnating boy (see Extracts 2, 3 & 4) – as entrenched in and under surveillance by kinship structures of small rural settlements or poorer communities (see Chapter 4). As such, these constructions frequently function as unchallengeable full stops, and 'obstacles' in public health discourses that are hard to 'reach' or 'remedy'.

Delius and Glaser (2002) have tracked tangled genealogies of traditional cultural deployments of sex in South Africa to figure a 'cultural system' whose capacity to regulate

itself has been 'irrevocably damaged' by Christianized colonization from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and then by institutionalized apartheid oppression. The constitution of a 'cultural taboo' regarding sexual communication thus defensively wards off persistent (colonial) constructions of African sexuality as an exotic, pre-modern, hyper-sexualized and promiscuous 'Other' that resists western regulation. As I suggested in Chapter 4, these constructions underpin notions of 'African Aids' as a virulent, heterosexually driven, out-of-control epidemic, fuelled by (coercive) patriarchal gender relations (e.g. Patton, 1990a, 1992, 1993, 1994); and 'traditional cultural beliefs' about reproductive sex (e.g. Kelly & Parker, 2001a; Kelly & Ntlabati, 2002; LeClerc-Madlala, 1997, 2001, 2002b, 2003). An upshot is that HIV/Aids risk in Africa is conflated with the structure and (dys)function of traditional African families (Patton, 1992) – including the authoritarian/neglectful regulation of children's sexuality as childrearing practice.<sup>8</sup>

#### **EXTRACT 2 [from FGI 5]**

34 Xoliswe: In my culture, that is Xhosa, and I come from my home is there by Amagwabe  
35 in Ciskei, that is near to Cofimvaba, it is the rural area and the parents do not speak with  
36 children about sex. My own parents, my father left us when I was young, my mother said  
37 nothing, nothing about sex. When my period came, my auntie gave me some things those  
38 pads of cloth and she told me I must watch out now with the boys or I would get  
39 punished. This is how it is in my culture and it is a problem now with children doing sex  
40 very young, they get pregnant and Aids because they do not know the proper things with  
41 sex like the *ABC [Abstain, Be faithful, Condomize]*. There is no media there and they will  
42 not learn, no the elders will not learn new ways.

#### **EXTRACT 3 [from FGI 1]**

43 Nokothula: [...] I'm coming from Lusikisiki, Lusikisiki in the Transkei, and it's not easy  
44 there. For us to speak to our parents about sex is something out of the question, because  
45 your mother or grandmother would just scream, 'why are you so dirty that you want to do  
46 something like that?' Even if they take you to the teachers, the teachers also respond just  
47 like the parents, they will just see you as the girl who will spoil the whole class with  
48 pregnancy and they punish you. Everyone knows you there, they know your family, the  
49 teacher knows your family and so they will talk. It's not easy for us to change like that.  
50 Toto: Well, let's just say it was not easy back then, but now maybe it is easier to change.  
51 Abigail: I don't know if it's easier.  
52 Nokothula: [Overlapping, inaudible] I'm saying it isn't easier there.

**EXTRACT 4 [from FGI 1]**

54 Nokothula: For us, for me in my culture you need to be 21 years [*to be sexually active*]  
55 and you need to be working for yourself because if you are still at school, you still behave  
56 as if... Even if you do have a boyfriend at school, it's something else when you come  
57 home. You still behave as a little girl so that you are not detected by the parents that you  
58 are growing older. They will start beating you up because even if they don't catch you  
59 red handed with the boy, they will still be suspicious, they will beat you so you tell the  
60 truth and 'I'm seeing so and so' and they will visit his family and they demand money  
61 then.

These 'in my culture' constructions (lines 34, 43 & 54) are read as deployed by Xhosa speakers to conjure up - in the *present* tense - 'the way things are', in traditional cultural contexts in under-developed contexts in South Africa. Such reflexive (self) positioning espouses resistance that runs wildly in several directions simultaneously - and hence its extraordinary powers for speakers. First is a sense of impermeability and indestructibility of traditional African culture - survival against all colonial odds that openly defies attempts to muzzle it. In South African discourse on 'difference', such (African) cultural defiance is inevitably and emotively coupled to notions of 'white guilt' and 'white accountability' for the misdemeanours of a discriminatory apartheid-past (Kottler, 1990). For example, this 'culture' has defiantly withstood a historicized migrant labour system that produced female-headed homesteads in impoverished and isolated rural areas when adult men and fathers 'migrated' (without their families) to urban centres for employment (cf. 'father-absence', line 36) (cf. Liddell et al., 1991).

Second, in contemporary frame of HIV/Aids, this 'indestructible culture' similarly figures as withstanding all (flawed, flailing) media-efforts to re-inscribe, discipline, rehabilitate or harness norms of sexual, childbearing or childrearing practice. This positioning powerfully resists coercive western normalization in mediated parenting advice through discredit of any persuasion by material such as *Straight Talk* might provide, on the grounds of an indictment of expertise as either (a) culturally inappropriate, that is out of touch with local realities and practices steeped in tradition (e.g. 'the elders will not learn new ways': lines 41-42); or as (b) non-existent, that 'proper' mediated health education is absent and/or withheld from certain rural contexts that need it most (e.g. 'there is no media there', line 41). This explains

media's 'failure' and traditional culture's 'recalcitrance' in terms of lack of penetrative encoding and reach/access of mass media communication.

The interactive positioning scuffle in Extract 3 (see lines 50-53) regarding whether 'cultural change' is 'easier now' (post-apartheid) or not, is unsurprisingly unresolved and unclear as everyone begins talking with simultaneous yeses and nos. The powerful initial construction of culture-as-it-always-is sets up conditions of *impossibility* for *Straight Talk*'s advocacy of normative change towards open communication about sex between daughters and mothers, of traditional African cultural practices – *Straight Talk* is positioned as absurdly out of synch with reality.

But the constructions of 'in my culture' also open the way for a second tactic of positioning for these Xhosa speakers. They are entitled – through the authority of societal and subjective inscription by 'culture', something that white South Africans do not have (L. Swartz, 1998; and see below) – to tell such cultural stories *against* their culture. As well-educated professionals and parents now, they are able to adopt positions 'outside' the restrictive operations and harmful effects of such traditional cultures as background or heritage; they are able to (and do) embrace more 'liberated', 'modern', 'enlightened', 'middle classed' (westernized) positions. The sticky impermeability of 'culture' constantly reinforces the miracle of these speakers' enlightened 'escape'; or rather allows them to occupy both subjective spaces, as 'acculturated' and as 'modern' simultaneously. As such, they appear as powerful cultural brokers who 'interpret culture', and cultural change, for the audience of the group's (raced-white, culture-free) discussants.

I return to these issues in the sections that follow to explore the politics of *who* may speak critically of 'culture' or contest essentialisms, and *how* this is achieved in positioning around coercive normalization of childrearing, e.g. through cultural relativist positions or classed arguments about 'difference'.

## Traditional families within religious cultures

EXTRACT 5 traverses similar contours of acculturated resistance to *Straight Talk's* messaging, but here 'culture' is extended beyond that which is 'owned' by traditional African families. Here, different tactics of positioning in discourses about 'traditions' are deployed, tactics that police differences between groups of people. In Extract 5, Frank occupies a seemingly unassailable position as patriarch in a 'traditional family' based on religious (Christian-Catholic) discourses about values.

### EXTRACT 5 [from FGD 2]

- 60 Frank: I have three daughters and three boys, actually four daughters because my wife  
61 had a pre-marital child before we were married. I always tell them, this is our family  
62 tradition too, 'unless you are 21-years old you cannot come and tell me that you want to  
63 have sex, you are not independent yet and as your father I have to tell you about a  
64 number of things including your sex life'. This is how I put it to them, no sex before  
65 marriage, but again with the last one turned 18 she told us, 'I'm on my own, I'll live on  
66 my own'. I said, 'that's an American fashion not our family's tradition, you are staying at  
67 home'. The kids that she grew up with in exile are mostly from white American parents  
68 and she has more of an American upbringing. I said to her, 'yes you are 18 and are at  
69 university, but still certain things must be done according to my wishes'. The same goes  
70 for this stuff here [*Straight Talk*], it clashes it clashes with my culture, my family  
71 traditions, my church's beliefs, so I won't follow it.

Extract 5 was produced in a context of explicit resistance towards the 'liberal-therapeutic' doctrine inherent in *Straight Talk's* advocacy of granting teenaged children autonomy, once they have been informed about risks of sexual activity, to make their own sexual decisions (see Chapter 3). Speaking here from a position within a religious discourse that institutionalizes his patriarchal authority in and through his family, Frank reflexively positions himself as custodian of his children – until they reach legal or conventional adult citizenship at 21 years (line 62) – and he expects obedience to his 'wishes' (line 69). Within the limits of these wishes, Frank also subjects his errant wife and the daughter who is his wife's 'pre-marital child' (line 61) to this traditional deployment of sex within nuclear alliance. He thus positions himself as the guardian of the particular 'traditional' practices of his family, and claims authority to close this cultural system *against* the corrupting influence



of 'white American fashion' (lines 65-67) – figured here as liberal values of childrearing that foster autonomy and sex-before-marriage – and similarly against *Straight Talk* ('I will not follow it', line 70).

Thus, *Straight Talk* fails to persuade him of its premises due to 'clashes' with his 'culture', his 'family traditions' and his 'church's beliefs' (lines 70-71). This deployment of 'culture' is not told deprecatingly, against itself (cf. Extracts 2, 3 & 4); but draws on a counter-discourse of parental expertise – of parents knowing their children *better* than *loveLife* – to refuse normalization (cf. Alldred, 1996a). However, there was no countering Frank's reflexive self-positioning, as a (fairly arguable) barrage of I-statements spoken against the *Straight Talk* text, in the narrative that followed it. I return to these points in the following section/s.

#### 4. PARENTS KNOW BEST: CULTURAL DIVERSITY, LOCAL PRACTICE AND NORMALIZATION

##### Hailing powers of real stories about real families (just like us)

Positioning in religious discourses produced moments of resistance in the focus group discussions about *Straight Talk*, moments that were both discursively predictable and unexpected. On the basis of their own particular 'Christian' family practices and values, subjects were resistant due to the perceived lack of diversity of parenting expertise and parental experience reflected in the *loveLife* messaging, deemed biased, narrowly prescriptive and coercive of youth's sexualized activity. Such reading subjects bemoaned the inadequacy of identification points within the *Straight Talk* text; its limits excluded stories of 'real families' like their own, who have had childrearing successes through other, marginalized practices. EXTRACT 6 draws on these ideas about parental expertise and diverse experiences, and formulates the problem with uptake of childrearing advice that doesn't 'fit with your beliefs' (lines 36-37), for what is 'right for the family' (line 42).

**EXTRACT 6 (from FGD 3)**

- 1 Lindy: Putting a condom on from a Christian perspective? [Laughter]  
2 Eileen: No, from a Christian perspective, teaching children about sex with that  
3 perspective or how can you say, values in the family when... It's family values when the  
4 teenager, you don't want them to just decide to just have sex on their own, here's a  
5 condom and get on with it if they want to [cf. *Straight Talk*]. From my perspective, in that  
6 experience of my family upbringing, it [*Straight Talk*] has left out the role of the parents  
7 is left out of it.  
8 Lindy: Hmmm, I don't get that. Do you mean that different values are left out, the  
9 different values that different parents hold, abstinence, celibacy, no sex till marriage,  
10 those values associated with spirituality?  
11 Eileen: Some value on that, yes and I can say that the condoms and all the conversations  
12 can be there, it is necessary for teenagers everyone sees this is true, but... there can be  
13 other family perspectives also, otherwise it is not personal for mothers and they won't  
14 take it to their heart. Parents can say what they want for their children to do, or I can say  
15 they must say that, because that is what they... They are the guides, they are wiser, it  
16 must be so. [...]  
17 Lindy: How could it do that? How would you make a text in the media that was useful to  
18 parents who were struggling with their teenagers?  
19 Eileen: I don't know. [Laughter] I would say that it's really difficult to say that now, in  
20 modern times with the dangers and sex everywhere.  
21 Costas: I think it is in telling personal stories about people, in detail stories about families  
22 and how things are with communication for them, everything like that, what works there,  
23 why it is like that for better or for worse, that is what such media should be. I read this  
24 [*Straight Talk*] piece and for me, I don't believe it or there aren't the details there for me  
25 to go on and believe it. I was thinking all the time, it was screaming at me all the time  
26 that I don't believe it because I am a man as a father reading it. And I ask if... Is there a  
27 mother there who told her daughter such things about liking sex and so on, and gave  
28 condoms to the girl and said 'having sex or not, it's your decision'? I think about what...  
29 what is the husband is saying to his wife about this matter, and that girl, if you asked her,  
30 Eileen said it just now, she did not like her mother to speak like that before her.  
31 Lindy: Yes, I understand what you're saying. Who is that family and how does that  
32 particular family work?  
33 Costas: And is it happy like that?  
34 Eileen: It's more also, it must not be just that one family in *Straight Talk*, even if they are  
35 happy or not with that way, parenting in that way, but many families the ways of many  
36 different families. I can say like a series of articles that tell stories, each one with a  
37 different one, then you can choose, follow the story that you can see if it fits with your  
38 beliefs. [...] [*Eileen clarifies this point a few minutes later.*] My point from earlier on is  
39 that *Straight Talk* should try to have many conclusions, and... and also how those  
40 conclusions came to the family. Sometimes it's not a problem that has made it like that,  
41 it's not a reaction to trouble if I can say it like this, it's a choice that parents have made  
42 together how to bring their children in the world, it's a choice and you live along it, in  
43 those terms like that, because you believe it is right for the family.

I will explore two analytical aspects related to resistance that emerge from Extract 6: the deployment of diverse 'stories' of families (plural) within a discourse of cultural relativism, and the inter-subjective dynamics of discussions about issues of 'cultural difference'. First, opposition to *Straight Talk's* permissive advice regarding communication about sex with teenagers and autonomy in their sexual decision-making crystallizes for this Christian subject (Eileen) in value-conflict. From this Christian position, values such as abstinence – that is, values Other to *loveLife's* assumed 'liberal', 'permissive', or 'informed choice' values about sex – are occluded in *Straight Talk*, as are parental responsibilities and rights to inscribe such values on their children (lines 13-14). This valorizes parental expertise – as in, parents know best – and figures them (parents) as experientially 'wiser' than children (or experts); and as 'guides' (line 14).

Such faith-based positioning is invoked to refuse the unilateral, coercive normalization of *Straight Talk's* messaging that represents 'just that one family' (line 33) and prescribes 'one conclusion' (line 38) as the answer to all problems related to sex and HIV-risk. Surprisingly, *loveLife's* regime of truth is not simply displaced by a (more righteous) Christian regime of truth. Instead, a discourse of cultural relativism is invoked that requires as its premises, swarming, serialized 'stories about families' and 'personal details' (lines 20-2 & 33-5) to ceaselessly multiply identification points with diverse contexts, practices and subjectivities, and that would facilitate reading subjects' persuasion, hailing and interpellation based on recognition – here the (fictionalized, agentic) 'choice' of the one that 'fits' (line 36). I return to the inter-subjective (narrative) production of this cultural relativist 'surprise position' below.

The hailing power of the 'story' in health pedagogy – or 'stories' of real practices in real families, plural (see Chapters 2 & 4) – is deployed here as a strategy of resistance towards *Straight Talk*. While some critical readers interrogated the gaps and spins of information in *Straight Talk*, the speakers in Extract 6 – Costas' 'manly' and 'fatherly' position (line 25), and Eileen's motherly desire to take something 'personal to [her] heart' (lines 12-13) – questioned in particular the inadequately storied detail, as the narrative packaging of information, in the introductory scene of mother-daughter communication in *Straight Talk*

(lines 20-9). This is a useful critique inasmuch as it seeks, and fails, to place or position the 'unreal ideal' family practices depicted in *Straight Talk* in the lattice of inter-subjective contexts that enmesh sex communication in 'real' families.

Thus, a persuasively 'real story' in *Straight Talk* – that had 'the details there [for me] to go on and believe it [or not]' (line 23-4) – would include, for example, the following reader-identification positions: (a) what the mother *really* said about (liking) sex to the daughter; (b) how the daughter *really* felt about being spoken to like this; (c) how the oft troubled negotiation between custodians of 'family values' and preferred styles of sex communication with their children was resolved; (d) why particular 'choices' were made; (e) what problems, successes and conclusions accrued from such choices, and so on. Such argumentation implies that while stories of real families may not be equally right, or equally persuasive, the reader is thereby enabled to (partially) 'choose' and (partially) 'resist' from an array of 'real' options, rather than binary (outright) acceptance or (outright) refusal of the preferred position that *Straight Talk* pushes.

### **Manoeuvring between (risky) Christian and (safer) culturally relative positions**

The second aspect refers to dynamics of inter-subjective positioning in Extract 6. In this Chapter, I sought – as discourse analyst – to engage the inter-subjective interstices between reader and text, *and* between readers, speakers and subjects as they interactively negotiated 'positions' in the group discussions. But, pithy, sequentially interactive, inter-subjective dialogue in the group discussions was somewhat thwarted by the polite, almost guarded, manner in which participants talked about parenting, culture, race or religion. This was so even where the differences between social groups, families and positions so constituted or (reflexively) confessed – and judgements about rightness and wrongness of particular 'Other' positions/practices – were fairly contentious. Utterances tended to slip non-responsively past one another, addressed as reflexively self-positioned, confessional 'I-statements' (a) to a broader audience of the group, (b) to the group facilitator who asked benign, corrosive, panicky, or silly questions to keep 'discussion' going, or safer still, (c) to the *Lovelines* text itself.

These dynamics were interpreted (by me) firstly as a strategy to maintain the fragile truce of tolerance and reconciliation in the fraught interstices between race, culture and class in post-apartheid discourse in South Africa. 'Difference' is hard to talk about in fragile conditions of new democracy built on constitutional equality. Secondly, many participants did not 'know' one another well enough to challenge positions about 'personal' issues of their childrearing and religious practices without risking offence. Extracts 7 & 8 below articulate ruder exceptions – based on prior relationships outside the discussions - that inevitably rupture such (polite) 'orders of discourse'. Thirdly, my own (critical) positioning – as indicative of my analytical intent, to 'do things' to or with their words later; as we had 'doing' with the words of others during research methodology seminars – was hard to read.

On the surface of Extract 6, its speakers – Eileen and Costas - glide over bumpy value-conflict terrain in relation to resisting *Straight Talk*, carefully supporting one another's arguments on what media tactics should be, hypothetically speaking, to effect (their) persuasion. However, attention to my own inter-subjective position/s within the dialogue - as facilitator, as subversive speaker, as discourse analyst - reveals the conversational cues for cultural relativist positioning. Where positions are unclear or dialogue is cautious in Extract 6, my positioning figures as an interrogative Other – either (a) as playfully comedic (e.g. 'Putting a condom on from a Christian perspective?': line 1), or (b) as an explicit position-challenge to provoke subjective response (e.g. 'How could it do that?': line 16; or 'Who is that family and how does that particular family work?': lines 30-1).

This is evident in what follows on from my apparent interrogation of Eileen's Christian positioning on values ('Hmm, I don't get that. Do you mean...?': lines 7-9). Eileen's response appears to anticipate and ward off the interactive perils of discursively 'naming' her position as either (1) 'religious', which might be read by me as 'narrow-minded', 'conservative' or 'dogmatic'; or as (2) about 'abstinence' as a value, which might be read by me as 'naïve' about adolescent sex and risks. Her response reflexively renegotiates her positioning within a safer discourse of cultural relativism, where she may defensively apportion fair-minded weight to *loveLife's* condom-advocacy and open conversations with children about sex – as 'necessary for teenagers, everyone sees this is true, *but...*' (my

emphasis, lines 10-12) – the interruptive opening a resistant space for insistence on inclusion of abstinent values and other family perspectives and stories.

### The (colonial) ways of whites, and cultural others

My 'devil's advocate' position (above) was contingent on particular group dynamics, and shifts in EXTRACTS 7, 8 and 9 below, taken from another group discussion where speakers adopted more confrontational inter-subjective positions. Extracts 7, 8 and 9 return to a politics of positioning around (African) 'culture', who may speak for or against it, and how 'race' and 'class' are inevitably implicated in such speaking. Ann (in Extract 7) begins this dialogue with resistance to *Straight Talk* from a cultural relativist position that defends the integrity of local, different, marginalized childrearing practices. This position is roundly challenged in Extracts 8 and 9.

#### EXTRACT 7 (from FGD 5)

- 1 Ann: When you were saying just now that it was the same there [*in Namibia*] and here
- 2 [*South Africa*], sex is a universal problem, I was thinking to myself, 'no it isn't, not
- 3 really, not at all'. Namibia sounds like it has a good schools-based program that builds in
- 4 diversity as its core principle. The problem here in South Africa with this *Straight Talk*
- 5 material is that it closes down the diversity in how sex is talked about in families, and it
- 6 sets it up one way, this correct way of talking will undo all the kinds of messy problems
- 7 that Xoliswe mentioned [*see Extract 2 above*]. But are we saying then that this correct
- 8 way is better than and should replace the traditional cultures of people? Was Xoliswe's
- 9 mother wrong to do what she did, keep she kept silent? Was she ignorant? Was she
- 10 neglectful and uncaring? I think she probably had some reasons about why she didn't
- 11 speak, and one of them was that she knew another woman in your extended family, like
- 12 your aunt or a grandmother, would step in when needed and explain it. I don't want to
- 13 speak for you or interpret your experience, but it seems to me that this is how such things
- 14 like sex occur, in a in a system, a cultural system, and there are many many of these in
- 15 South Africa. So I feel very uneasy when *loveLife* says their way of open talking about
- 16 intimate details will fix everything [cf. *Straight Talk* text], and if you follow this truth,
- 17 these facts, then girls will become empowered to use condoms every time they have sex
- 18 and power and Aids will disappear. I don't think it's that simple.

#### EXTRACT 8 (from FGD 5)

- 19 Ann: So, I think you're telling us then that this cultural way of sex communication didn't  
20 work to protect you from these experiences and dangers? [*Xoliswe had subsequently*  
21 *described her own unwanted pregnancy as a 15-year old in rural-Transkei.*]  
22 Xoliswe: When I read this *Straight Talk*, I can see these things that we did not know then,  
23 and these things, such talk about love, boys that have electric sex in them [laughter],  
24 negotiating condoms, these things are better, better than our culture of no talking.  
25 Rick: That's the opposite of what Ann was saying just now [see Extract 7].  
26 Xoliswe: No, yes, my people or Xhosa people they say in our culture we do not talk sex  
27 and such matters, these are the ways of Whites. This is what they say, eh, I don't know, I  
28 don't know what that culture of the Xhosa is now, is it our Xhosa culture to not to  
29 educate to our children properly with sex because our parents and ancestors did it? Then  
30 the culture stops like that, it is stuck in the olden time when instead it is changing with  
31 the modern time in South Africa, that is what I think. I can say they [*parents and*  
32 *ancestors*] didn't have AIDS then, they did not have proper education in apartheid, they  
33 were poor there in homelands areas. It is different times now, we Xhosas do not wear  
34 [animal] skins, you know, women digging the fields, sending children to look after goats.  
35 It must change, and so our African cultures must learn to talk sex properly if this can help  
36 to save our children.  
37 Ann: Yes, that is different to what I said earlier... I was arguing about keeping such local  
38 cultural knowledges intact, protecting what was good in them from the ideological  
39 colonialism of *loveLife*.

#### EXTRACT 9 (from FGD 5)

- 40 Rick: I just find that a racist argument, Ann, sorry, with respect [laughter], because why  
41 doesn't the same thing apply to my parents, good old white middle class stock who were  
42 as screwed up as all hell about sex. They were staunch Anglicans and just disapproved of  
43 lust or all sexual pleasure as sin as far as I can make out, and they refused to confront that  
44 prejudice, they told me nothing positive about sex, nothing, absolutely zip. [...]  
45 Ann: So why am I a racist then? [Laughter]  
46 Rick: I didn't say you were a racist! [Laughter] I said that protecting precious culture  
47 argument could be construed as racist [laughter] because it's only ever applied to African  
48 cultures. I don't see anyone standing up to defend screwed up white liberals' sexual  
49 conservatism against *loveLife*, defend white white culture, you know. Everyone just  
50 assumes that white families are open and comfortable with sexual communication, that  
51 there's no sex taboo for whites, and that's crap frankly, it's crap.  
52 Ann: Hmmm. [Laughter] He's right, that's why he is so damn irritating. [Laughter]

Ann's resistant positioning towards the *Straight Talk* text in Extracts 7, 8 and 9 draws on a discourse of cultural relativism to refuse *loveLife*'s normalizing displacement of 'the traditional cultures of people' (line 8). The absolution of blame of Xoliswe's mother for her

silence about sex operates through situating her childrearing practice in a context of an extended family network or 'cultural system' (line 14), where sexual inscription of girls on a need-to-know basis (e.g. at menarche) is deferred to other female, familiar subjects (line 12)(see Chapter 4). This cultural positioning pivots on 'protecting what is good [in local cultural practices] from the coercive ideological imperialism of *loveLife*'s advocated childrearing practices (lines 38-39). Such resistance might be understood as 'politically correct' in post-apartheid or post-colonial discourse; but Ann – a white middle class feminist academic – recognizes that such cultural positioning is slippery territory. She reflexively disclaims her rights to 'speak for' or 'interpret' Xoliswe's experience (line 13) – Xhosa-cultured, rural peasant background – and she ends up speaking instead against the ideological delusion of 'fixing everything' (line 16) through *Straight Talk*'s style of communication about sex. This is backing down to take the least line of offence.

Extract 8 picks up the discussion after Xoliswe had further disclosed her own unwanted pregnancy when she was 15-years old. This disclosure prefigures a powerfully authoritative counter-position to Ann's protection of traditional culture, and through it Xoliswe indicts 'our culture of no talking [about sex]' for her own troubled sexual experiences (line 24, my emphasis). This culture is African/Xhosa, and the possessive 'our' excludes rather than includes Ann in its operative practices and effects. Ann is thus inter-subjectively discredited as someone who may speak for this culture. Furthermore, her culturist position sharply diverges from Xoliswe's appropriation of *Straight Talk* as 'better than our culture' (line 24), is publicly marked by comment from another (white) participant ('That's the opposite of what Ann was saying just now', line 25); and finally acknowledged herself ('Yes, that's different to what I said earlier', line 37).

Xoliswe's appreciative appropriation of *Straight Talk* positions herself then in globalizing counter-discourses of modernity, enlightenment and class mobility; and allows her to speak against the backwardness and harmfulness of her own Xhosa cultural traditions. She achieves this through questioning static, closed, nostalgic models of culture – 'I don't know what that culture of the Xhosa is now, is it our Xhosa culture to not to educate to our children properly with sex because our parents and ancestors did it?' (sic, lines 27-29) –



drawing on emotive then-and-now constructions of progress, freedom and social and subjective responsibility. I return to these constructions again below, but in Extract 8 discrepant conditions of political, economic *and* cultural possibility are invoked through a binary between (a) a historicized 'then' of tribal primitivism [culture], apartheid oppression [race] and rural-peasant poverty [class]; and (b) a 'modern time' post-apartheid, inscribed with the hapless contradictions of new life-opportunities through freer access to education, and an HIV/Aids epidemic that kills 'our children' (lines 30-36) (cf. Posel, 2004).

As I have shown above, Xoliswe's appropriation of *Straight Talk* in Extract 8 interweaves lines of racialized, acculturated and classed positioning, and draws power from their potentially historicized interstices. If traditional culture is cast as repelling modernizing and life-enhancing changes, it does so in the name of repelling 'the ways of whites' (line 27) – this resistance is construed here as traditional cultural no-talking-about-sex opposed to white open-talking-about-sex (cf. the *Straight Talk* manifesto). Xoliswe glides fairly easily over such racialization of *Straight Talk*'s 'white' messaging through coupling this misguidedly resistant reading to 'our Xhosa culture' (line 26). She dissociates resistance from herself through her reflexive preference for a classed position that asserts the subjective and material benefits of education, choices and health *over* traditional cultural childrearing practices (lines 31-36). Nevertheless, this utterance introduces the racialization of culture, and of resistance, that follows; and legitimizes it through Xoliswe's racial marking as Other than white. Rick's subsequent challenge of racism in Extract 9 might be understood as an interactive manoeuvre taking its cue from Xoliswe's 'permission' to speak about race.

### Conditions of possibility for racialized, and racist, positioning

In Extract 9, a young white male academician (Rick) wades into accusations of racism against a white woman, senior academician (Ann). I am cautious to place such dynamics of interactive positioning within the contestations that this particular group discussion produced, rather than impute such readings as generalized resistance to *Straight Talk*'s messaging. This 5<sup>th</sup> group was constituted of two (white) academicians – both of whom were known to me (also a white woman academician) in various academic, research and

social contexts outside of this discussion; two Xhosa-speaking women, post-graduate students, whose 'cultural stories' about their parenting experiences became pivotal objects for discussion (and surveillance); and a Namibian-Herero man/father. The previous allegiances between academic participants, and their strength in numbers produced conditions for particular dialogue to occur.

Much of the edgy criticality in inter-subjective positioning in this group discussion mimicked the cut-thrust-and-parry tactics of agreed-upon codes of intellectual debate. Fairclough (1992, p. 166) has referred to this phenomenon of inter-discursivity as 'ethos' – where models from other genres and discourse types are deployed to constitute the subjectivity of participants. Thus, the place and time of other interaction, and its ethos of discursive participation, is 'modeled' through (paradigmatic or vertical) inter-textual linkages; here in terms of the genre of intellectual discourse or debate. In this discussion, it was understood then that 'arguments' were contested ('that argument could be construed as racist': line 47-8), and that this more or less elided attack that was 'personal' ('I didn't say you were a racist!': line 47).

Power relations between shifting academic positions outside the group discussion inscribed the positioning-politics within the group discussion. Rick's performance in the group discussion as 'bright spark', 'court jester' and 'edgy critic' was played out, as resistance, against Ann's and my own containing collegiality towards him – hence a level of amused tolerance towards his tactics here (see Extract 9, line 53); and later attempts to muzzle his causticity (see Extract 10 below). Fairclough's (1992) notions of paradigmatic and syntagmatic inter-textuality (cf. Kristeva, 1986) are bent slightly here to interpret how Ann becomes (in Extract 9) a positional target for interactional challenges of contradictory (line 25) and racist argumentation (line 40).

Kristeva's (1986) concept of inter-textuality deals with the interrelation between rhetorical and ideological phenomena in literary texts.<sup>9</sup> This concept draws on the basic Bakhtinian ideas that any text/narrative is constructed of a mosaic of quotations, surfaces, or voices; and that any text is the intersection, absorption and transformation of others. Kristeva

(1996) transmutes such inter-textuality into inter-subjectivity, in that she posits a creative, kaleidoscope, polyphonic subjectivity, a subject-in-process, in an attempt to 'articulate a precise logic between identity/unity, the challenge to this identity and even its reduction to zero, as the moment of crisis, of emptiness, and then reconstitution of a new plural identity' (p. 190). Kristeva's (1986) analysis – following Bakhtin – of three dimensions of textual space, implicate the writing subject (author), addressee (audience), and texts exterior to this space. Statements may thus be defined along two axes: horizontally (syntagmatically), where the words are 'chained together' through a shared frame of reference between writing subject and addressee; and vertically (paradigmatically), where the words are oriented towards a wider diachronic or synchronic corpus as 'context' (p. 37) (cf. Fairclough, 2001).

Such inter-textual praxis is more complex in interactive talk – turn-taking utterances in conversations, rather than Fairclough's or Kristeva's *texts* – because authorial surfaces constantly shift between speaking subject and audience positions. Bevan and Bevan (1999) have adapted Kristeva's 'vertical inter-subjectivity' to refer to (1) appropriation of other texts, voices or positions – from contexts 'outside' the focus group discussion itself – to speak for oneself at particular moments (e.g. factual information from a brochure, a husband's opinion, a priest's counsel, etc.). It also refers to (2) awareness of the existence of prior relationships of power between established subject positions (vertical, paradigmatic axis); and the opportunity, in discussions, to re-negotiate and resist such prior inter-subjectivities (horizontal, syntagmatic axis). Thus, subject positions negotiated relationally in other contexts (e.g. lecturer-student, between custodians of children, or parent-child) and socio-structurally mediated subjective positions (e.g. gender, race, culture, class), fabricate inter-subjective positioning in interactive conversations in ways that are predictably resistant, but in unpredictable ways (Wetherell, 1998).

**That's a racist argument, sorry, with respect...**

Such prior positioning seemed, in the context of the focus group discussions conducted in this chapter, to be somewhat easier to negotiate around 'gender' than 'race'. For example, *Straight Talk's* (ideological) assumption of *mothers'* responsibility to talk about sex with

children, and *mother-blame* when it all goes wrong, was consensually refused by women and men as text-consumers (see Extract 13 below). However, the frequent bouts of laughter that punctuate Extract 9 are read as unease with the racist labeling, as a particularly fraught South African 'ideological dilemma'. Rick and Ann are thus set up to perform this white-raced 'spat' about racism – with its characteristic rhetoric of accusations, denials, disclaimers and qualifications (Van Dijk, 1992) – for an apprehensive but appreciative audience. Although Ann finally admits guilt and defeat ('he's right': line 53), she does so by drawing on her prior positioning of (academic hierarchical) authority over Rick – repositions his rightness and self-righteousness as 'damn irritating' (line 53). She regains power through raising a laugh at his expense.

Rick's accusation of racist argumentation in Extract 9 is (apologetically, respectfully) directed at Ann's cultural relativist position – 'I just find that a racist argument, Ann, sorry, with respect [laughter]' (line 40) – namely that it is *only* 'precious [African] culture' (line 47) which is worthy of defense against *loveLife*'s coercive colonization of appropriate sex-talk to inoculate against HIV/Aids risk. Rick interrogates the racialized premises of un/worthy conservatisms through casting 'African taboo' regarding sex-talk with children against the similar restrictive taboos of his own white family. His parents' conservatism about sexual matters – positioned as 'good old white middle class [staunch Anglican] stock' (lines 41-43) – is figured as a 'white liberal culture' (lines 49-50) that is 'screwed up as all hell about sex' (line 42), and that as such it is indefensible against *Straight Talk*'s gainful liberation against repression.

While Rick tackles Ann's protectionism of traditional cultural childrearing practices (and its lack of defense of 'white culture'), his accusation of racism is as much a positional broadside against Xoliswe's earlier rehearsal of the binary constitution of 'white openness about sex' versus 'African taboo' (lines 26-27). Here then is the challenge of the racialized assumption that 'white families are open and comfortable with sexual communication' (line 51) as 'crap frankly' (line 52). Racial differences are closed down through recourse to an inherent similarities-between-all-people discourse (cf. Kottler, 1990), here similarities of sexual

inhibition and taboo about talking about sex in families; and indeed *all* families (universally) might thus be persuaded of the beneficence of 'opening up' about sex.

A caveat: such a psychoanalytic universal-taboo argument – *everyone* is screwed up about sex ('post-Freud etcetera', see Extract 11 below) - does *not* appear in group discussions as wholesale advocacy and eager endorsement of *loveLife*'s appropriation to effect sexual liberation through childrearing revolution. Rather, this argument seems to achieve two pivotal positioning functions. First, it serves to set up a 'universal need' for healthy, positive, life-changing (etcetera) advice on childrearing and children's sexuality for parents. This is seemingly taken-for-granted and 'bought-into' within Fairclough's (1995a) ideological work of government of subjectification. But this ideological position is accepted in order to display how the *Straight Talk* missive dismally fails to meet this pressing need – as a failure of Fairclough's rhetorically persuasive aspect of media. Thus, the universal-taboo argument opens up a critical space between 'ideal' and 'real' that is fraught with resistances about *Straight Talk*'s messaging and tactics.

Second, its universalism powerfully closes down the threatening discussion of racialized and acculturated differences with regards sex and sexuality (see Extract 11 below). It is a (mostly) white-raced tactic that will resurface in the following section on social class. Ironically, this tactic is also used by *loveLife* in the constitution of a globally stormy-and-stressed, biologically wired, sexually active adolescent who is race-free, culture-free, class-free, and context-free – and always already universally risk-saturated (see Chapters 6 & 7).

## 5. THE CLASSING GAZE IN POST-APARTHEID

Several complex ways in which social class intersects with appropriations of *Straight Talk* have become visible in the section above. Such complex cross-over reading positions are understood to be constituted in the shifting social and subjective contexts of post-apartheid South Africa, where 'class' increasingly comes to stand for or explicate 'racial', 'ethnic' or 'cultural' differences (Foster, 1991, 2004). Foster (2004) argues that this slippage happens uneasily, to avoid the dividing-talk about 'race' or 'culture'; and unevenly, in that 'class' is a

more readily available diagnostic label for particular groups of people rather than others. In this section, I will briefly highlight several such classed reading positions for subjects in relation to the *Straight Talk* text, particularly where socially classed positions inscribe resistances to preferred interpellation in multiple ways.

### **Middle classing whiteness, and class mobility aspirations**

A first reading strategy involves the exposure of the middle classing of whiteness as an empty (or stereotypical) gesture of difference. In Extract 9 above, Rick's 'conservative about sex' family background is intricately raced (white), classed (middle class), and positioned in terms of religious affiliation (Anglican) and political leaning (liberal). These dimensions of difference are presented as evidence of his positioning within inexplicable, invisible and indefensible 'white culture', which appears to be defined through its *lack* of [African] cultural inscription. This is a fairly common colonialist construction of white (settler) subjectivity as culture-free and middle-class (cf. class-free); cast against acculturated and raced-black, peasant or working class, indigenous heritage as 'Other' (e.g. Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Stoler, 1995).

However, the tangled knots in threads of white subjectivity – particularly the apparent contradictions between its (political) 'liberalism' and (religious) 'conservatism' towards sex – are deployed here to resist notions of *raced* or *classed* sexual differences. In other words, whiteness is complex, conflicted, (surprisingly) sexually conservative and *not* simply docile to *Straight Talk*'s dicta; *nor* porous to persuasion. As a critical reading position, this powerfully inscribes the meaninglessness and superficiality of 'white middle class' as a preferred category of liberated sexual subjectivity. This position draws strength from the (psychoanalytic) universal-defensiveness discourse about sex, and wards off assertions of classed differences, such as the tactics that follow.

A second (contrary) reading strategy entails the re-invention of class differences in order to articulate the shifting subjective positioning of class mobility. This produced ambiguous appropriated positioning of *Straight Talk* in the discussions by African women, and the

following sections counterpoise such maternal positions of persuasion (cf. Xoliswe) and refusal (cf. Thandi).

Xoliswe's wholehearted buy-in to *Straight Talk* in Extract 8 above adopts a reflexive subject position that pivots on aspirations towards class mobility – from the stigmatic subjective marks of rural peasantry, apartheid racial oppression, indigenous heritage, unwanted teenage pregnancy and risks of HIV/Aids - the struggle to transcend culture/context and crudely put, to embrace white-raced/classed aspirations, privileges and choices as modernizing advancement. This trope of class mobility was routinely used in the group discussions by educated, professional, African women, who struggled to articulate why their experiences of childrearing practices around sexual communication - their mothers' styles and their own - might 'err' on the side of repressive restrictions on and authoritarian control over girls' sexual autonomy.

EXTRACT 10 below inscribes parental communication about sex with 'choices' about social mobility (amongst many other things), and constitutes the conditional failures of *Straight Talk's* pedagogy in a Xhosa-speaking mother's dialogical account of her teenage daughter's pregnancy. The narrative extract is lengthy to capture both (a) Thandi's elaborate use of vertical inter-subjectivity (cf. ethos), and (b) the horizontal inter-subjective interrogation of her choices in the discussion, as complementary processes of dialogue in the re/negotiation of her maternal subject positioning.

**EXTRACT 10 (from FGD 5)**

- 1 Thandi: I know it is not in the Xhosa way, that cultural custom of my people, the parents
- 2 do not talk to their children, it is like Xoliswe said [*see Extracts 2 & 8 above*]. This was
- 3 not the rural areas, but in Mdantsodi where we lived, that is the township nearby
- 4 Somerset East. Me and my husband we are educated people, teachers, and when my
- 5 daughter menstruated, I said to my husband, I will talk to her this and this, because it is
- 6 dangerous with HIV and pregnancy in this community, such things, and she will be
- 7 protected. I talked, I told her many many things [about sex], even though my husband
- 8 said to me, eh, don't do that, you make her want to try that sex. [...]
- 9 Lindy: So, your husband didn't agree with this or support you?
- 10 Thandi: He is a church-going man, Methodist. Our family is that way, raised in that god-
- 11 fearing way where sex is for marriage. That is not the Xhosa custom, but it is from the

12 church and the children must know this too. Ai, she [*Thandi's daughter*] did not listen to  
 13 anything, nothing that I talked nicely to her, that is how children these days are very  
 14 naughty with their parents, she was pregnant when she was Grade 9, 15 years or so. The  
 15 family of the boy gave money, it was not much but then we sent him [*the baby*] to  
 16 grandmother, my own mother [*in rural Transkei*] so she [*daughter*] could go to school,  
 17 but her mind was not there for a long time, her mind was with this boyfriend with a job in  
 18 town and a car. Afterwards, he went to Joberg, it was a disappointment for her but it was  
 19 better at least with schooling, she is 18 now, very late for Grade 10.  
 20 Xoliswe: Tch, tch, tch.  
 21 Ann: That is such a painful experience, and we're sorry for that. [Pause] I just wondered  
 22 when you talked nicely to your daughter, what you talked to her about?  
 23 Thandi: It was menstruation, the women's body things getting ready for sex which is very  
 24 natural, but staying away from boys for now. It was almost like the same as *Straight Talk*,  
 25 but with abstinence from sexuality, the Christian way, not with condoms all the time.  
 26 Rick: I can see that you tried to talk to your daughter, Thandi, and I appreciate that, the  
 27 kind of talking you did with her is better than no talking at all, but I think, or should I say  
 28 from my perspective, and I'm not the expert on this, and I don't have any kids myself, but  
 29 I think you made some mistakes with what you told her.  
 30 Ann: Rick...  
 31 Rick: I don't want to criticize...  
 32 Lindy: Then don't! [Laughter]  
 33 Rick: I don't mean it to be personal criticism, I just wanted to mention some of the  
 34 problems with...  
 35 Thandi: I know I made a mistake. My people, the community there in Mdantsodi  
 36 laughed. They said, haai, you are very stupid to be listening to Whites, the Whites that  
 37 tell you you must talk about sex, this and that, this and that, this talking sex is White  
 38 values. It is not of our culture, your husband told you, and now your daughter is pregnant  
 39 because you did not listen to your husband.  
 40 Xoliswe: It was not your fault as a mother she was pregnant. She would have done sex  
 41 with this boy if you talked or if you didn't talk. It was not your fault, but it was her fault  
 42 [...]. It is always the boy who is blamed for sex. You think she [*Thandi's daughter*]  
 43 didn't want to have sex with that boy? She did not want to wait for him, she did, yes  
 44 hmmm, she wanted that boy with money and a car, that is how girls are now in modern  
 45 times, it's not just boys who are naughty to want sex, the girls give it. They don't want to  
 46 wait. They don't want to work. They just want the money.

### Going against culture, listening to whites, asking for trouble

In Extract 10, Thandi positions herself as a parent – along with her husband – at a nexus of contradictory threads of subjectivity: as 'educated people' (teachers, line 4), as 'church-going people' (Methodists, lines 10-11) who live in an urban township inscribed by 'cultural customs' of 'the Xhosa way' (line 1). Several issues leap from this nexus, in many directions



and layers simultaneously. First is the disciplinary imperative of formal education in South African discourse on racialized economic discrimination as the route of social and subjective escape from the apartheid past (cf. Chisholm, 2004). Thus, entrepreneurial responsibility is inscribed on African subjects by political regime-change, and this is performed through exercising educational rights and opportunities. Thandi and her husband are figured as having succeeded in this modernizing, class-mobile professionalization, and are now impelled to maintain their elevated class status through inscription of such values/practices on their children. This becomes a dominant trope in Thandi's renegotiation of her maternal subjectivity and her daughter's re-inscription after the irruption of her pregnancy (see below).

A second issue relates to how contextualization troubles the above (ideal) subjectification (cf. Kelly et al., 2001; LeClerc-Madlala, 2002b; Patton, 1996; Wetherell, 1998). Thandi describes the community in which her family lives as 'dangerous with HIV and pregnancy' (lines 5-6); and also operating according to traditional [Xhosa] childrearing practices, including that 'the parents do not talk to their children [about sex]' (lines 1-2). In relation to these warning signs, Thandi positions herself as custodian over her daughter's sexualized body/self; and she is impelled to talk about sex – counter her cultural practices and husband's counsel - in order to ward off risks of unsafe community norms. At menarche, she warns her daughter off sex ('staying away from boys for now': line 23).

This parenting strategy is well documented elsewhere as responsive to the inevitability of too-early unprotected sex in resource-poor conditions, where 'risk safety' (for girls) is not easily negotiated within gender-skewed and acculturated norms (e.g. Kelly & Ntlabati, 2001). This positioning also indicts health promotion campaigns – such as *Straight Talk* material under discussion - that emphasize individualized, autonomy-based, rational-choice sexual decisions, and that have little impact on coercive sexual norms in communities (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002, 2003b).

These two issues collide through the constitution of precocious, normative adolescent sex, and the risks of pregnancy and HIV/Aids, as obstacles to rightful education and class

mobility (cf. Walkerdine et al., 2001). This clearly infuses the practices of sex communication between parents and children with the desires of class mobility, achievement through hard work and material success (cf. Rose, 1990); and with producing citizens who may bolster or boost the family's future welfare and class status (cf. Barrett & McIntosh, 1982). Thandi's account in Extract 10 is one of perceived parental failure – 'I know I made a mistake' (line 35) – and is powerfully told *against* appropriation of the *Straight Talk* pedagogy on childrearing and sex communication. Here, a daughter's future is figured as *almost* derailed by unwise feminine subject positions: a mother who resisted acculturated norms by talking about sex; and a daughter who gave way to acculturated norms by falling pregnant. I will now examine the process of Thandi's renegotiation of her maternal subject positioning in Extract 10 through considering vertical inter-subjectivity (in her own talk to/about herself), and then talk-in-interaction, where her self-positioning is challenged by the group's discussants.

Kristeva's (1986) vertical inter-subjectivity configures here several real/imagined audiences to and against whom Thandi's (resistant) negotiation of maternal subjectivity – and concomitant childrearing practice – is played out very publicly in/for the focus group discussion, as *another* audience and site of surveillance.<sup>10</sup> These refracted panoptic surfaces are thus deployed to defensively and reflexively comment on her conflicted subjectification – to speak to, judge and re-voice her own 'failure' as a mother from various critical positions – even before the focus group discussants jump in (see below). These audiences are multivalent: a husband who disagrees (lines 7-8); a boyfriend's family who pays too little for the baby (line 15); a grandmother who takes the baby in (lines 15-16); a community that laughs (lines 35-39), etc.

The sharing of such enlightened or socially mobile positioning with her husband - in terms of education, profession and religion - does not guarantee his approval of her adoption of 'unconventional' childrearing practices. This inter-subjective dimension – between custodial parents or partners in familial units - of negotiating consensual, appropriate strategies of communication about sex with children is eclipsed in *Straight Talk*'s exclusive focus on mothers as talkers-about-sex, and marginalization of men/fathers (see Chapters 6 & 7).

*Straight Talk* inscribes such decisions as autonomous, and within a (good) mother's ambit of power to make.

Extract 10 features a dispute about Thandi's childrearing practices; and her 'mistake' is constituted differently by herself (reflexively), the multiple panoptic audiences of herself she articulates (vertical axis of inter-subjectivity), and interactively by other discussants in the group (horizontal axis of inter-subjectivity). Thandi initially positions herself, and her choices of childrearing practices, *against* these other (vertical) voices and texts. Thus, working with the now familiar binary between white-presence versus acculturated absence of 'talking about sex', *that* she talked to her daughter *at all* about sex at menarche is construed (by herself) as resistant positioning. This resistance is construed *against* 'that cultural custom of my people' regarding *not*-talking (lines 1-2); *against* her husband's voice that recycles the tacit truism that communication with children about sex fabricates curiosity and experimentation (lines 14-15); and *against* religious occlusion of 'sex is for marriage' (line 18).

In this opening section before 'group discussion' of her positioning (lines 1-19), Thandi constitutes the failure of her (maternal) resistant positioning, the crisis of emptiness of her mothering, as firstly located in her 'very naughty' 15-year old daughter who 'did not listen' to her 'nice talk', who disobeyed her and consequently fell pregnant, viz. 'Ai, she did not listen to anything, nothing that I talked nicely to her, that is how children these days are very naughty with their parents' (lines 12-15).

The second failure – according to class-based discourses about social mobility – was in her daughter's almost-disrupted schooling as a result of pregnancy, threatened child-care and distraction by an older boyfriend. The daughter's position within the schooling narrative is restored through displacement of 'obstacles' – the baby and the boyfriend – geographically elsewhere (lines 15-19). This denouement, offered as a form of narrative closure, constitutes a 'happy ending' from a discourse on social mobility; and an opportunity for Thandi to 'save face' for the various audiences (or sites of surveillance) of her maternal failure. She scrambles here to renegotiate a normalized maternal subjectivity inscribed with

appropriately classed desires regarding education, and its promised linearity between scholarly successes and elevated professional statuses.

### Horizontal interrogations of mothering practices

However, Thandi's story invites other participants in the discussion group into the narrative fray (lines 20-34), and along the horizontal axis, they adopt several interactive subject positions in relation to her confession that impel further clarification and defense. Participants began cautiously through acknowledgement of the difficulty and disappointment of this family-experience (e.g. Xoliswe's expression of empathy, having survived a similar story herself, 'tch, tch, tch': line 20; and Ann's apology to Thandi, 'we're sorry for that': line 21). But, the fault-line – according to agreed upon, psy-complex-inscribed positions on how 'close' communication about sex *should* be fabricated between mothers and daughters – is quickly exposed, viz. 'what [did] you talk to her about?' (line 22, my emphasis).

This interrogative worries at the binary between 'talking' and 'no-talking' about sex established earlier by Thandi; and opens up meta-talk about the talk-about-sex itself. The interrogative also operates on the assumption (encoded within *Straight Talk*) that sex communication *should be more* than simply a one-off, pubertal lecture on reproductive biology and risk-prohibition (see Chapters 3, 6 & 7). This means that participants – Ann and Rick in Extract 10 – deploy powerful psy-complex positions inscribed by the ideological assumptions of the *Straight Talk* text to 'judge' Thandi's (inadequate) childrearing practices.

Thandi is pushed to confess what she talked to her daughter about; and this appears in full plane of sight for the group's examination, viz. 'natural' biological information on reproductive capacity (marked by menstruation), avoidance of boys (as impregnators) 'for now', and value-inscription - 'abstinence from sexuality, the Christian way' (lines 23-25). She carefully qualifies her (Christian) value-based resistance to the sexual permissiveness implied through the *Straight Talk* text's advocacy of condom-use. Thus she represents her parental communication about sex as safely aligned with the *Straight Talk* text - 'almost like

the same as *Straight Talk, but...* (my emphasis, lines 24-25) – the interruptive ‘but’ signaling the powerful disjunction of abstinence as rupture of and resistance to *loveLife*’s preferred dictum of informed choice.

Rick’s bald positional challenge – ‘I think you made *some mistakes* with what you told her’ (my emphasis, line 29) – is elaborately and defensively dressed first with appreciation for Thandi’s efforts (‘the kind of talking you did with her is better than no talking at all’: line 27); and then disclaiming his own childless authority to judge her as a parent (‘but I think, or should I say from my perspective, and I’m not the expert on parenting, and I don’t have any kids myself’: lines 27-29). Despite such qualifying disclamation, Rick’s position is of course predicated on the ideological assumption that a ‘correct’ or ‘better’ kind of talking (to this daughter, about sex) – perhaps following the *Straight Talk* model although this is not explicitly said in Extract 10 – would have prevented all the trouble in the first place. This position slides inexorably towards blaming mothers for various ‘damages’ assumed to accrue as a result of absent or inappropriate kinds of talking about sex with children.

Rick’s challenge runs into interactive positioning trouble of its own. His two academic colleagues police his inter-subjective judgement of Thandi’s mothering – Ann’s warning ‘Rick...’ (line 30), and my own prohibition ‘Then *don’t* [criticize]!’ (line 32) – serve to protect Thandi on grounds of her unequal footing in this (intellectual) discussion with regards (a) her student-status relative to ‘us’ as academicians; (b) her embedded, familial womanliness relative to Rick’s rational-male, childless autonomy; (c) her acculturated and classed racialization relative to Rick’s (privileged) neutral whiteness; and (d) the vulnerability of the experience of ‘mothering failure’ just disclosed. Rick claims, defensively, recalling prior rules of intellectual discourse, to *not-intend* ‘personal criticism’, but ‘just’ to consider ‘some of the *problems* with...’ (lines 33-34).

Thandi does not need Rick’s exposure of her ‘mistakes’ with regard to what she said to her daughter about sex, when, how and why. She is both cognizant of and reflexive about these mistakes – the smudgy marks of a docile subject after all – and interrupts him to proclaim her own failure (‘I know I made a mistake’: line 35). However, Thandi’s formulation of her

mistake is contrary (and resistant) to Rick's coercive questioning of how she spoke about sex with her daughter. Thandi articulates a defiant refusal of *Straight Talk's* ideological premises (about the risk-safety of talking-sex), and capitulates to those prior voices/audiences (of neighbours, of husband) she had previously resisted. She re-aligns herself with a cultural position, as her rightful and authentic (subjective) place. Here, the voices of her community are heard in her mimicked utterance to directly mock and deride her subjective misalliance with 'talking sex' as 'white values', viz. 'Haai, you are very stupid to be listening to whites, the whites that tell you you must talk about sex, this and that, this and that' (lines 35-38).

Such re-voicing or reflexive dialogical critique cuts deeply, two ways. First, it cuts to the root of interpellation through a radical questioning of the childrearing expertise deployed in texts like *Straight Talk*, and the racialized interests it serves. This worries at the (ideological) causal assumption between talking-about-sex and inoculation against risk of unwanted pregnancy (see Chapter 6). Her own parenting experience thus provides ample empirical evidence that this discursive imperative is misguided in her particular context; or just plainly wrong/ineffective.

Second, in the way of post-colonial discourse, Thandi is exposed – in her aspirations of class mobility – as (stupidly) 'trying to be white' through absorbing 'white values' about sex and childrearing (e.g. 'listening to whites': lines 35-38). This taps into powerfully racialized discourse of resistance in ex-colonized contexts where educated African, middle class people are talked about as 'sell-outs', 'coconuts' or 'Oreo-cookies': as black-skinned but filled with white values inside (Frankenberg, 1993; Otto, 1999; Packard, 1989). Thandi stands accused – by this cultural surface/text, this site of surveillance – of acting against culture ('it is not of our culture': line 38), and of acting beyond her station in her working classed and risk-infested community. Thandi's mistake then powerfully appears as a function of vertical inter-textuality, as being duped by white-information; and of 'not listening to [her] husband' (lines 38-39). This twist of power fabricates Thandi's mistake in a more sinister, causal, regulatory way: Thandi's daughter is pregnant, *because* Thandi broke cultural and gendered

ranks - she disobeyed her husband. She reverts to this 'acculturated' positioning inscribing silence-about-sex.

### **Material girls fast-track class mobility**

Xoliswe's critical response in Extract 10 to Thandi's constitution of her 'mistake' opens up another class-mobility reading of girls' subjectivities. This position disclaims Thandi's confession of her maternal culpability in the consequences of her daughter's sexual activation ('It was not your fault as a mother she was pregnant': line 40), through a powerful refiguring of girls' sexual agency. Within this configuration of girls' tactical uses of sex as transactional exchange for material and subjective privilege (cf. LeClerc-Madlala, 2001, 2002b; Rubin, 1975), mother-blame for inadequate communication about sex is undone ('She would have done sex with this boy if you talked or if you didn't talk': lines 40-41). Routinized blame of boys 'who are naughty to want sex' (line 45) – along the lines of a MSD (Hollway, 1984a) – is also undone, or reframed through girls' sexualized manoeuvring. Girls are figured then as 'giving sex', as 'not wanting to wait', because of the investments in and rewards of sexualized positioning – along the lines of a HHD (Hollway, 1984a) – viz. 'wanting that boy with money and a car' (lines 43-45), with sex as bait and barter; and a baby as relationship-glue, male financial obligation of sorts or State/welfare child support grant (cf. Macleod, 1999; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

This fast-tracks social mobility through immediate access to wealth and subjective status as a 'girlfriend' (of an older, richer man) and 'mother' (of his child), without onerous labour through education towards a professional career ('They don't want to wait. They don't want to work. They just want the money.': lines 45-46). This class-based positioning speaks to rigorous demands placed on young working class subjects in a post-apartheid capitalist economy in South Africa to compete and achieve freedom as 'successful individuals', often without adequate resources and/or enabling environments to do this (e.g. Macleod, 2002; Stevens & Lockhat, 1997). This 'girl-power' in exchange-sex is not construed as a positive development of women's empowerment – Xoliswe's position in Extract 10 issues veiled criticism of 'that is how girls are now in *modern* times' (my emphasis, lines 44-45) – and

frames the small victories of feminist discourses as dubious. It figures young women as acquisitive, individualistic consumers capable of sexual deceit and manipulation of men as a new class of sexual/financial victims.<sup>11</sup> It also positions white-raced, western psy-complex parental 'talking about sex' as powerless and useless against these black-raced contextual and economic forces of sex in historically under-developed, poorer communities (cf. Campbell & MacPhail, 2003b; Kelly et al., 2001).

### Class-based access to media

A third class-based reading position was concerned then with how particular groups of people were included and excluded from 'sexual enlightenment' (and resistance) through unequal, classed access to media (cf. Pecheux, 1982). This produced considerable resistance to *Straight Talk's* 'limited reach' – the raced, classed and gendered distribution of materials to those who could afford its access – and thereby, its slanted, elitist messaging that 'missed the mark'. EXTRACT 11 captures some of these tensions in talk about class and race, and the prescriptions on possibilities for persuasion (by *Straight Talk* in *Fairlady*) that this produces.

#### EXTRACT 11 (from FGD 1)

- 1 Nokothula: Yes but it [*access to and use of media*] is not the same for everybody. Like in
- 2 South Africa it's the black children, or how should I say the African children, that need
- 3 the open information, they need talking from parents because it isn't there, they need the
- 4 media because it isn't there for those children.
- 5 Abigail: I think you know that's probably more about class than culture or race.
- 6 Lindy: Can you... explain that a bit?
- 7 Abigail: Well, the levels of openness about sex in families is related I think to economic
- 8 status, how educated the parents are, what resources they have access to in terms of I
- 9 don't know the newspapers they read, magazines ja this kind of stuff [*Straight Talk*], the
- 10 television they watch, whether there's an online computer there that kids can use, stuff
- 11 like that. That's classed, so in working class white families and peasant families, African
- 12 rural families, there'd be a more closed conservative authoritarian approach to sexual
- 13 stuff, I don't know if I'm talking rubbish here, I'm just thinking that as a media person,
- 14 I'd expect that to be so. That collapses that dangerous cultural differences thing in South
- 15 Africa, whites are like this open and everything liberal about sex, and in black
- 16 communities talking about it is taboo. I'm just saying that talking about sex is, you know



17 post Freud etcetera, modernity whatever, difficult it is damn difficult to do for most  
18 people, and most parents are uncomfortable sometimes with it.

Extract 11 begins with Nokothula's bottom-line resistance towards the 'usefulness' of media persuasion in general, and *Straight Talk* in particular, in changing childrearing practices: it cannot help if it 'isn't there', if it doesn't reach those who 'need the open information [about sex]' most (lines 1-4). This reading powerfully indicts *racialized* inequality in media access; that it is '*black* children, or how should I say the *African* children' (line 2, my emphases) who are sex information-deficient, and embedded in sex-talk-deficient families and resource-deficient communities, thereby are placed at greater risk of unwanted pregnancy and HIV/Aids. Abigail – who is white – challenges Nokothula's racialization of differences through a classed reading of media access, consumption and uses/effects ('that's probably more about class than race or culture', line 5). Her 'media-person position' maps out these discursive limits, as follows: openness about sex in families is fabricated through higher levels of access to education and mediated information; and by its reversal/extension, lower socio-economic status correlates with 'a more closed conservative authoritarian approach to sexual stuff' (lines 12-13).

Abigail appears to anticipate the risks of this position with a rapid disclaimer – 'I don't know if I'm talking rubbish here' (line 13) – for, of course, classed divisions haplessly fold into the very racial and cultural ones she explicitly set out to avoid (e.g. the synonyms of 'African', 'traditional culture', 'working class', 'rural peasantry', etc.). Her initial argument set out to deploy class-based differences to 'collapse that dangerous cultural differences thing in South Africa' – namely the explicitly racialized, acculturated 'othering' between white 'liberal-therapeutic' approaches and black taboo on sex-talk with children (lines 14-16, my emphases). When this position gets into (racist) trouble, she safely neutralizes any differences-danger through recourse to the always already familiar psychoanalytic discourse on universal-taboo, viz. '*most* people/parents' – 'post-Freud etcetera, modernity whatever' – are defensive and uncomfortable with talking about sex (lines 16-18, my emphasis).

## 6. PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED: THEN-AND-NOW CONSTRUCTIONS AND YOUTH ACTIVISM

Things are different now...

The analysis of Extract 11 above focused on how a 'universal need' for open sex communication might be thwarted as much by traditional *and* modern defensiveness as by unequal, class-based access to sexual health education (and childrearing) materials through media. The set of subject positions articulated in this section resist the constitution of a pervasive climate of defensive embarrassment about sex-talk between parents and children by contesting the premises of the 'individualized problem' as formulated by the *Straight Talk* text. Through elaborate then-and-now constructions – for example, reflecting on the differences between their parents' (repressive) practices in talking about sex with them, and their own (enlightened) practices with their offspring (cf. Foucault, 1978) – speaking subjects fabricate a 'different world' in which to situate their resistant appropriation of *Straight Talk*.

They did not formulate resistant positions towards *Straight Talk* because they were defensive about talking about sex with children; but because they were always already having such conversations with them. In this way then, *Straight Talk* was positioned as out of step with 'real changes' in 'real conversations' within 'real families' in 'real communities'. *Straight Talk* thus operated on an inaccurate and hyperbolic stereotype of defensive unwillingness that insulted its readers' communication with their children, and the multivalent social system in which communication with children was embedded (see 'unwillingness': Chapter 7). Once again, the poverty of representation of diverse stories of functional families in *Straight Talk* – and of recognizable identification hooks/hails – was indicted. As Kelly et al. (2001) have argued with respect to mass communication, recognition and support of practices that are 'working' is as important as identifying risky factors that need to change.

The then-and-now constructions were hard to capture in neat sequential narratives, or moments of crisis, for analysis here. **EXTRACTS 12 and 13** grasp three family genealogies

of sex communication between parents and children; presented here (again) as reflexive positional statements. Interactive positioning through the turn-taking monologues in Extract 12 is indicated only through the brief consensus-marker: 'I agree' (line 15). But these seemingly seamless horizontal inter-subjectivities underscore the complex vertical inter-subjective negotiation – between children, mothers and her partner/s, mothers' parents, teachers, neighbours and faith community members and media – that is implicated in these mothers' subjective accounts of their 'positioned choices' of childrearing practices.

#### **EXTRACT 12 (from FGD 2)**

- 1 Shanti: I can say that there are many ways of us growing up and some are not so good.
- 2 Like for an example, if I can relate to myself, who in my family was there to talk to me
- 3 about sex? There was no one, and certainly not my mother she was nothing like this in
- 4 *Straight Talk*. I went off to a Catholic school when I was 9-years old and the only thing
- 5 that you heard about sex there was that it was wrong and bad and you should not do it till
- 6 marriage [...] So yes, as a mother I'm preparing my 8-year old already about sexuality
- 7 because sexuality is not about sex, it's about you as a person and how you discover
- 8 yourself [...] At 6-years and 8-years old my children already know the terms vagina and
- 9 penis and not Dr Mannetjie [laughter] Dr Mannetjie and all these funny names that we
- 10 give them. I think that they should know where they come from, that they're not little
- 11 baboons whose tails were chopped off like I was told by my mother [laughter] [...] So I
- 12 think preparation with sex is very important in my family life, hopefully I am preparing
- 13 my children with the necessary information and values that I believe I didn't have. I feel
- 14 strongly about that.
- 15 Arube: I agree and believe that it is different from what it was in the past, for our parents
- 16 sex was a very sensitive issue to discuss with children. I think it was as if they were
- 17 afraid that if you knew sex that then you would experiment. Today parents are more open
- 18 about this issue. But I think that parents didn't choose this change. They are forced to be
- 19 more open because our children are being exposed to so many things in life, sexual things
- 20 I'm talking about. These things are everywhere. You can't stop it. As a parent of two
- 21 teenagers I feel that I should be the one who educated my children especially when it
- 22 comes to sexual issues. But they have Life Skills teachers at school these days that also
- 23 talk about that, and even in one of the subjects, is it physical science or biology. They are
- 24 exposed to these things too [...] So I feel that a parent should really make an effort to
- 25 discuss these issues openly with their children so that the children can easily come back
- 26 and ask questions and talk, continue with the discussion. That's what I think and my
- 27 husband too. As adults we can make it comfortable for them to talk to us about sex, all
- 28 those things.

**EXTRACT 13 (from FGD 1)**

- 29 Nokothula: I think anyway now the pressure is tilting away from us as parents and the  
30 values of the home, because our children are now in these multi-racial schools where they  
31 learn a lot, even the language that they learn now coming from these schools.  
32 Lindy: What do you mean, the language they learn, Nokothula? [...]  
33 Nokothula: I'm saying that they are free now to ask us so many questions. They are not  
34 like the kids in the [*rural Transkei*] village, who were afraid of asking parents questions,  
35 scared of getting punished. Our children, they are not afraid to ask things about sex, or to  
36 tell their parents the rules. I have a little girl in Grade 2, I ate a banana one day and I  
37 threw the skin out the window, and she was furious. She said, 'why are you littering, we  
38 were told at school not to litter, why are you doing that?' And old as I am, I became so  
39 ashamed of what I was doing [laughter]. The pressure now... I think the pressure now is  
40 they are going to bend our rules, the rules of our culture. We will not be as rigid as  
41 before. We cannot be rigid because it will not work with our kids [laughter].  
42 Lindy: Do you think that that's a bad thing [laughter], a good thing?  
43 Nokothula: It's a good thing, yes, eh, it's good. They ask us as their parents about sex.  
44 They watch *Days* and *The Bold* [*soap operas on television*] and she will say, 'Ma, Ridge  
45 was doing this and that and so' [laughter]. I wouldn't do that to my own mother, but she  
46 is doing it to me and I don't see anything wrong with it, it's good, it's better like this.  
47 Jay: But don't you think the emancipation or liberation of our minds shouldn't be taken  
48 over by our kids? We should take the initiative and liberate ourselves and get away from  
49 what it used to be.

Extract 12 and 13 cast the childrearing practices deployed by these three mothers (now) – specifically related to technologies of communication about sex, sexuality and sexual issues with children – against the silence, defensiveness, myths and restrictions of punishment inscribed on them by their own parents (then). These mothers' accounts bear marks of subjective re-inscription by the normative truths purveyed by psy-complex expertise, such as *Straight Talk* in this instance, or other sources elsewhere. The fearful silences of parents of yore – governed by the misperception that sexual information produces sexual experimentation (line 17) – are overwritten here by normalization of everyday and ordinary conversations with children about sex. Such conversations are construed both as 'protective' (e.g. of children who are 'exposed to so many things in life, sexual things', line 19), and as 'formative' in that they inevitably invoke Foucault's (1978) salience of 'sexuality' in the constitution of the modern self (e.g. 'sexuality is not about sex, it's about you as person and how you discover yourself', lines 7-8).

In terms of particular technologies of sex communication with children (cf. *Straight Talk*), these appear in Extracts 12 and 13 as using anatomically correct names for genitals (line 9); dispelling myths of origin ('little baboons whose tails were chopped off', line 11); value inscription (line 13); facilitation of custodial approachability as a source of emotional safety and normalization of sex for children (cf. Bowlby's 'safe base', lines 25-26); and discussion of everyday sexual events and issues, here related to media consumption of globalized American soap operas (lines 44-46). These 'liberations' carefully follow lines of psy-complex expertise set up in Chapters 3 and 7, although are not experienced as top-down instruction and rule-following (cf. Rose, 1992).

Through adoption of these technologies of communication, then-and-now stories appear as powerfully counter-repressive (cf. Foucault, 1978); as the resistant fashioning of enlightened and liberated sexual and maternal subjectivities *against* the sins of their mothers, fathers and background village-cultures. These reflective stories powerfully constitute 'personal experience' – then as children, now as mothers – as the most salient form of persuasion or agency in their subjective transformations of childrearing practices. Thus 'real family experience' – embedded as it is in shifting societal interstices between family-units, schools, media, peers, and parental relations with children themselves, as influences – is told as resistance towards the ab/normalization (or implication of the universality) of defensive sex communication in *Straight Talk*.

The persuasiveness of this text may thus be disclaimed and refused as stereotypical, as preaching to the converted, as out of synch with 'real experience' that is always already altered and altering – even while *Straight Talk's* (insidious, beneficent, normalizing) psy-subjectionification is inscribed on mothers as self-governing subjects. But even while these mothers celebrate the persuasion by their own 'experience', rather than by prescriptive parenting expertise, as if these were binary forces; they reflexively position themselves – through their 'choices' of their own childrearing practices – as resistant in divergent ways.

### Shifting imperatives for mothering 'choices'

Shanti's account of her persuasion to 'sexual enlightenment' in Extract 12 appears as carefully aligned with her childhood experience of sexual *mis*information by her mother and Catholic schooling (lines 1-14). She chooses reversal as a position of resistance and liberal-therapeutic or liberated discursive re-inscription, to provide for her children 'necessary information' and 'positive values' that she didn't have (line 13), to her subjective detriment as a girl and young woman. Flowing on from such (reversed-experience) 'choice' in Extract 12, Arube's subjective re-inscription is powerfully figured as *not* of her own choosing (i.e. 'parents didn't choose this change', line 18). She reflexively positions herself as '*forced* to be more open' (lines 18-19, my emphasis); forced by external social forces beyond parental control – particularly schooling, but 'these things are everywhere' (line 20) – that ensnare children in a (risky) web of sexualizing discourses. She positions herself as forced to act – pragmatically, reactively, in the children's best interests, to the best of her ability – *contrary* to the childrearing practices she would personally choose, viz. 'I feel that I should be the one who educated my children especially when it comes to sexual issues, but...' (lines 21-22).

This underscores the Foucauldian notion that the structure and functioning of families, and the custodial subjectivities they inscribe, are forged within shifting conditions of possibility (Rose, 1990). The modern constitution of subjectivity around the central sign of sex/uality, and conditions of sexual risk in an age of epidemic, fabricate (knowing and vulnerable) 'children' in ways that scaffold particular kinds of custodial surveillance and intervention (Singer, 1993). In Extract 12, Arube's albeit reluctant positioning in this counter-discourse about the *social ownership of children* as (risky) sexual citizens (cf. Burman, 1994) forces her into a resistant subject position against the traditional individualization of the 'sex education dyad in the home' in/advertently reproduced within the *Straight Talk* material.

Drawing on this discourse of social – rather than solely familial or maternal – inscription of sex on children, Nokothula's maternal subject position in Extract 13 finds power 'tilting away from us as parents' (line 29). Here [African] children's subjectivities are depicted as re-invented and empowered through new educational opportunities in South Africa ('these

new 'multi-racial schools where they learn a lot', lines 30-1). This pedagogy appears here to inscribe a 'language' of sexual citizenship – subjectified as awareness of 'rights' and 'rules' of responsibility; as 'free' and 'unafraid' to 'ask questions'; and as *not* bowed by 'culture', sex-talk taboo or parental authority (lines 33-40). The 'multi-racial' marking of schools implies that African children are inscribed with psy-complex-sanctioned, middle classed, sexual subjectivities of 'whiteness'.

The dynamics of the institutional (psy-complex) and social networks of surveillance in which children are embedded in an age of HIV/Aids epidemic fabricates socially and sexually activated subjectivities in the sense of risk-vigilance. As I showed in Chapter 4, mobilization of a discourse of (African) youth activism in the struggle against apartheid fashioned much-vaunted 'young lion', warrior or guerilla subjectivities (e.g. Macleod, 2002; Perrow, 2004; Stevens & Lockhat, 1997), that inevitably destabilized traditional relations of authoritarian parental authority in African families (e.g. Campbell, 1994, 1997; Dawes, 1994; Stevens & Lockhat, 1997). The crucial point here is that such reconfigured, socio-political, youthful subjectivities – see Extract 13 – require, inter-subjectively, the concomitant transfiguration of parental/custodial subjectivity. Thus, children and youth are powerfully figured as agents of change in the ways that sexual communication happens in families (e.g. they are 'asking us so many questions', line 33), and in 'bending the rules of culture' (line 40). A modern, open, enlightened and child-centred parent is called forth, and inscribed, viz. 'we cannot be rigid because it will not work with our kids' (line 41).

#### **Social ownership of children: diffusion of custodial responsibilities**

The locus of such social and sexualized activation of children does not lie in individualization of familiar dyads of mother and child of the traditional western psy-complex (cf. Rose, 1990; Wyness, 2000), but in a counter-discourse of social ownership that locates children as embedded in complex lattices of inter-subjective relations that include and extend beyond families. EXTRACT 14 below positively articulates the social web of relations that hold and scaffold this Namibian-Herero father's children's risk-safety and sexuality awareness development. Again, the interactive positioning dynamics in this

extract served to reproduce consensual agreement – ‘yeses’ (lines 64 & 69) and ‘Yes, I agree with your strong words about fathers and boys’ (line 65) – assenting to reinforce this critical positioning against (colonial) individualization in an African context of HIV/Aids epidemic.

**EXTRACT 14 (from FGD 5)**

- 50 Eyuba: My own children are [...] a daughter, she is 11 and a boy is 8. I am divorced, a  
 51 single father then with those young children, but my own parents [who] are old now live  
 52 there, they moved in my house [...]. The children are at school a lot, and they learn  
 53 mostly sex there [*Namibian Life Sciences/Skills programme*] and ask questions  
 54 sometimes at home. It is not so difficult with them, because they are not teenagers yet.  
 55 Some people say then the sex trouble will come to us, but I think maybe it will not,  
 56 because there are many people there to talk to them and guide them at school, in the  
 57 church, in their home, and they are very good with schoolwork and sport. There are many  
 58 many people who are interested in them and that it is easy to like them, myself too, as  
 59 their father, I like them [laughter]. I don't know much of this *loveLife* except *Straight*  
 60 *Talk* here, but I can see some problems with this if it is this media alone and there is not  
 61 diversity of information and skills on sex given in proper programs at school. It cannot  
 62 work if only mothers must talk to girls in the home in such a way, because the problems  
 63 of sex are much wider out in society, and this makes blaming of women for it.  
 64 Rick: Yes.  
 65 Eyuba: Yes, I agree with your strong words about fathers and boys, it is no use to find  
 66 them only in negative and foolish light in such media, and then sex is all the women's  
 67 work, sex talking with children and negotiation with condoms is all the women's work.  
 68 This is a problem for sexuality and HIV/Aids in Africa.  
 69 Rick: Yes.

The (resistant) subject position articulated by Eyuba in Extract 14 – as a single father/parent – maps his transgression of the discursive limits of nuclear family forms; and calls up the diversity of real household structures and extended functions of custodial care that constitute ‘families’ (cf. Bozalek, 1997). There is no evocation of a ‘broken family’ as a ruptured nuclear unit (‘family-in-crisis’) here; but rather a resourceful shape-shifting of domicile arrangements, and intergenerational and institutional inter-subjective relations that extend beyond traditional familial assumptions, e.g. grandparents and/or relatives at home; school and church communities of peers, elders and role models; varieties of media exposure, etc. (S. Swartz, 1997). This positioning is achieved by Eyuba through a qualified



ceding of exclusive parental responsibility for sex-pedagogy with children; and it positions his fatherly inscription as one source and support among many in a scaffolding web for his children of 'many people there to talk to them and guide them' (line 56), and 'many people who are interested in them' (line 58); thereby ensuring exposure to 'diversity of information and skills on sex' (line 61).

The subjective opportunity to renegotiate ideological (psy-complex) maternal interpellation as the sole-talker about sex with children, and as single-handedly warding off promised risks and damages to children's health,<sup>12</sup> is clearly gendered in this instance. Eyuba speaks in Extract 14 with the authority (and interactive safety) of the caring, resourceful, reasonable father who has not absconded from his family/children; and not as the mother who has. His position inscribes resistance to both (a) the *ideological* positioning of women/mothers in *Straight Talk* ('it cannot work if only mothers must talk to girls in the home in such a way': lines 61-62); and (b) the media tactics of *persuasion* that are deployed to impel this interpellation (fathers and boys 'in negative and foolish light in such media': lines 65-66). My analysis in Chapter 6 identified mutually reinforcing, inter-subjective positioning of the ideological (sexual) responsabilization of women/girls cast against, and warding off, unruly representations of the (sexual) irresponsibility of men/boys. Eyuba's resistance (with Rick's manly support) picks at these gendered limits, finding 'the problems of sex much wider out in society' (lines 62-63).

Such resistances to *Straight Talk* must be read in relation to their context of manufacture in a university-situated discussion-activity, as simultaneously gender sensitive, speaking up for beleaguered women, *and* gendered male, speaking up for beleaguered men. The narrowing of gendered positions critically exposed (in *Straight Talk*) is also produced through selective examination of 'this media alone' (line 60) – that is, 'out of context' of wider *LoveLife* campaigning, or that *Straight Talk* was explicitly directed through *Fairlady* at mostly middle class, white mothers (see Chapters 4 & 5). Nevertheless, several smaller resistances point to various tactics that might improve persuasive appropriation of *Straight Talk*'s messaging.

First, multiple subject-identification points for readers need to be embedded in a persuasive text. This point echoes earlier calls for diverse and richly detailed 'stories of families' – in all manners of their un/healthy 'work' and 'working' – to produce power through 'choices' from 'options' (see Extract 6 above). In Extract 14, this appears as a need for depiction of disparate configurations and functions of custodial networks that embed children, and flexibly negotiated care-giving positions with regards mothering and fathering – but extending these beyond the familiar assumptions of households. Second, this model of diffusion of custodial responsibility – of social ownership of children – might be usefully deployed to let mothers of the psy-complex hook without pejorative scare tactics of 'bad mothering'. Needless to say, what this requires as a starting point – as is configured by Eyuba in Extract 14 – is an enabling environment.

<sup>1</sup> My careful contextualization of the institutional conditions of manufacture of the *Lovelines* series – in the inter-textual chains between *Fairlady* and *loveLife* – have consistently set up (mostly white) middle classed women/mothers as a primary target audience. The actual production and distribution of *Lovelines* was the focus of an excised 'institutional ethnography' chapter. If the pivotal analytical tools of Fairclough's (1992) examination of practices of text production are *inter-discursivity* and *inter-textuality*, then his examination of practices of text consumption coheres around the principle/tool of 'coherence'.

<sup>2</sup> I connect this interactive model below to Fairclough's (1992) analysis of inter-textuality (cf. Kristeva, 1986). Here discourse (texts or positions) need to be analyzed *paradigmatically* (vertically) in terms of the repertoire of discursive alternatives that are available, and which are 'chosen'; and *syntagmatically* (horizontally) in terms of how these positions are jostled and re-assembled in the hurly-burly of interactive conversations.

<sup>3</sup> In applied health psychology, for example, focus groups are routinely used to explore the knowledges, behaviours, meanings and experiences related to health, illness, risk, treatment adherence, health provision and care (e.g. J. Kitzinger, 1999; Mathieson, 1999; Michell & West 1996; Strong & Large 1995; Varga, 1997, 2000; Wilkinson, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> This means that (a) objects, phenomena and authentic experiences are seen to exist underneath interactive language, as if it were a neutral medium of expression; and/or (b) POBAs – discussants' (cognitive) perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes – are taken as objective qualitative data (Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> This was intended to focus discussants' attention on parent-targeted *loveLife* materials. As I suggested in Chapter 4, solicitation of general talk around *loveLife* stereotypically involves ranting and raving about the highly visible, sexually explicit and/or 'incomprehensible' *loveLife* billboard campaigning, allegedly targeting young people (see Parker, 2003; Posel, 2004; Thomas, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Such vagueness speaks to how media, such as women's magazines, are 'consumed' – as too familiar and banal to be noticed as 'intentional'; and also as tied to particular contexts of consumption, 'read' in different ways at different times (cf. Hermes, 1995; Mills, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Due to limits of space, I cut sections on (7) 'personal' versus 'general' registers of sex-talk with children; (8) mother-blame, father-absence and partner-negotiation in childrearing; and (9) positioning in feminist discourses about sex and gender. These revisited gendered territories traversed in Chapters 6 and 7; and I wished here to explore slightly differently slanted 'post-colonial' appropriations. These excised analyses will be published elsewhere.

<sup>8</sup> Paruk et al. (in press) explain this ambivalent acculturated regulation of sex in an ethnographic study in rural community near Durban as follows: (a) limited communication about sex within families, where asking questions of parents (as 'elders') is perceived as disrespectful; (b) authoritarian commands (usually from mothers to pubescent girls) to avoid boys/sex; (c) limited or no opportunities for custodial monitoring of children; (d) acknowledgement of the 'naturalized' inevitability that youth will have (unprotected) sex, and this will (inevitably) lead to pregnancy; (e) extraction of financial support for the baby/family from the impregnating boy's family; (f) giving the baby into the teenage girl's mother's or grandmother's custody, while she goes back to school; and (g) reliance (within non-dialogical sexual norms) on injectable hormonal contraception, which offers no protection against HIV.

<sup>9</sup> My use of inter-textuality and inter-subjectivity here follows rhetorical/discursive work on narrative positioning (e.g. Bakhtin, 1986; Davies & Harre, 1990; Fairclough, 1992; Wetherell, 1998) – rather than the psychoanalytical variety (cf. Hollway, 1984a). From Bakhtin (cited in Fairclough, 2001) comes the inter-textual notion as 'an arena of struggle' over (ideological) meaning that is dialogical in its operation of voices/texts. Thus, any voice/text is implicitly or explicitly reacting to, embedding, and transforming (real and imagined) others; and it is in these inter-textual interstices that potentials for reflexivity, resistance and transformation lie. Kristeva and Fairclough did not examine these dynamics in interactive conversations.

<sup>10</sup> I presented an analysis 'Thandi's story', and the layers of inter-subjective surveillance of her mothering (by husband, grandmother, faith community, acculturated neighbours, group discussants), at a conference (see Wilbraham, 2004b). This paradoxically constituted another surface of oversight and audience. The point is made that 'mothering choices' are complexly negotiated inter-subjective manoeuvres; and various (panoptic) forms of surveillance hold disciplinary government in place.

<sup>11</sup> Such positioning is sensationalized in print media headlines, such as 'Sex for cell-phones: material girls do it for cash and clothes' (*The Independent on Saturday*, 13 September 2003, p. 1); and certainly 'transactional sex' appears as a major concern in more recent HIV/Aids campaigning with youth, because of 'coercion' of young girls by older boys/men into unprotected sex (e.g. A. Harrison, 2005; *loveLife*, 2000a; Parker, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> The psy-complex has 'attached' mother-child subjectivities in inexorably intimate, dyadic, regulatory and decontextualized ways (Burman 1994; see Chapter 2). This sets up the 'blameworthy mother' who, for reasons most often related to deleterious circumstances of poverty, illness or employment in African (or ex-colonized) developing contexts, produces so-called inadequate or inappropriate childrearing performances (Hook, 2002). *Straight Talk* uncritically inscribes acceptance of the (preferred) maternal positioning as sole- or chief-talker to children about sex; and further, inscribes techniques for this subjective work by talking in a particular ('open', 'close', and 'confessional') way.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

#### 1. GOVERNING MOTHERS AND RISK: EXPERTISE AND PERSUASIVE POSITIONING

##### Positioning 'findings' as readings of truth/expertise

This thesis has examined media discourse as social and subjective practice of government. My readings unpacked the ways that a particular pedagogical series of sexual risk-safety texts, *Lovelines*, addressed their targeted audience of (middle classed) mothers; and the ways that readers were directed towards particular subject positions in relation to these texts, expert discourses of childrearing and risk prevention of HIV/Aids, and their own communicative practice about sex with children, in family cells. These discursive events concerned the distribution of forms of expertise through a social matrix of power relations – between experts, mothers and young people - and drew mothers into participation in governmental tactics in the interests of risk-proofing their children. These discursive events also set up such positions and power relations as tiered planes of surveillance over the sexualized subjectivities of/with one another (cf. Said, 1985).

My readings were theoretically derivative, inscribed by Foucault's ideas (as lenses) about the discursive complex of family-sexuality-risk that coupled social security of healthy populations to psy-complex-inscribed micro-practices of childrearing in families - through disciplinary power (Chapter 2). This found mothers as subjects, governmentally positioned as relay points between 'public' and 'private' apparatuses (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), impelled to talk about sex/risk with children in particular ways. Fairclough's (1995a) CDA model applied to media discourse provided a broadly Foucauldian framework for understanding the circulation of this subject positioning of mothers – through (mediated) textual functions as 'a politics of representation', within wider structures of discourse, institutional and social practices of 'encoding' and 'decoding' (cf. Hall, 1997). With respect

to *Lovelines*, my questioning circled around (a) what custodial mothering practices regarding youthful sex/ualities were advocated in a time of HIV/Aids, and (b) how (governmental) 'persuasion' of mothers worked through subject positioning. This implicated qualitatively different readings of subject positioning in texts, and in forms of talk about texts and sex communication in families.

Many of this thesis's respected 'ancestors' – as signposts through the troubled relationships between text and epidemic – have found persuasion to 'fail' in producing so-called risk-safe sexual responses (e.g. Patton, 1996; Wilton, 1997). Their critical analyses of purposive texts/campaigning indicted *mis*representations and problematic discursive constructions of sexual practice as at fault; and culminated in brave, guns-blazing concluding chapters, where wrongs were righted and alternative textual strategies offered to (possibly) *improve* persuasion of recalcitrant subjects and/or remove oppressions. Thus, Wilton (1997) tackled regimes of biological functionalism that underpinned gendered subjectivity and imperatives of penetrative sex – with men as relentlessly virile, and women as seducible/seductive, risk-infested receptacles – tasked with responsibility for safer sex, but without effective power to enforce it. Recommendations proffered – for example, to pump up women's sexual agency and desire through erotic texts (e.g. Willig, 1999c), or safer sex lessons from San Francisco's iconic gay activism ('what queers know about saving lives': Patton, 1996, p. 146) – would require another thesis (for me) to deconstruct.

This is *not* to claim that the above recommendations would not be 'effective' in some way/s; or that I would be unable to make similar or other recommendations on the basis of my readings of *Lovelines* texts/talk. These recommendations would echo repeated calls by South African media-activists in HIV/Aids campaigning, for (a) *better* mass mediated messaging that mobilizes diverse representations of contextual, narrativized details of real, everyday lives that hook identification with smaller, practical health-enhancing options for action (e.g. Usdin, 1998); and (b) community-based, participatory programmes that enable action to challenge deleterious norms and build negotiation skills, *alongside* mass media communications that only work partially (e.g. Bhana et al., 2004; Campbell, 2003; Kelly et al., 2001). These adapted interventions to improve persuasiveness of self-governing tactics,

proliferating in a groundswell of critical consciousness in an age of epidemic, already exist in a multi-layered, fractious, complex, octopus-like *dispositif* (see Chapter 4).

My point is rather to mark the difference from these truth-and-progress imperatives (above) of my Foucauldian aims and position. This is not a comfortable position to espouse, because its strategic ambivalence (about knowledge and power) worries at, and refuses to extinguish, expertise. Presentation of my critical media-work to various audiences – for example, to *Fairlady*, *loveLife*, or public health forums (e.g. Wilbraham, 2002); academic conferences (e.g. Wilbraham, 2003, 2004b); and interactions with friends, students and colleagues – has produced predictable interactive positioning. The ubiquitous interrogation of my sampling of *loveLife* ('did you look at those billboards?'), and *Fairlady* ('isn't that a white woman's magazine?'), is answerable with a sardonic no and yes. But, the following positioning/s sequentially trailed my earnest exposition of Foucault's lifework, the government of maternal subjectivities through disciplining risk, and the partial/perpetual work of normalizing limits – and are somewhat harder to be wry about:

1. But, what were your findings?
2. My teenager is not interested in talking to me about sex, no matter how hard I try. Is this bad?
3. If you distrust childrearing expertise, why didn't you describe mothering experiences more substantively?
4. Do you have children of your own?

Such statements emit from the standard scientific assumptions of enlightenment; of closer approximations of truth as ignorance and ideology alike, are overwritten by empirical evidence; of beneficence to individual and community; and of the redoubtable assistance of expertise in living our lives (Macleod, 1999). Thus, given the emergency of HIV/Aids epidemic, and after six years of investigation, it was fairly reasonable to anticipate the 'truth' about talking with children about sex would triumphantly emerge – with its imperative curricula, ab/normal limits, tactics for success, cures for embarrassed mothers, cues for policy-makers, and/or innovatively cunning and persuasive textual interventions to rollout; as would my own status as 'expert', which would positively inscribe developmental

outcomes and risk-safeties. My status as edgy non-expert expert – warbling on about government of mothering through media discourse instead of how effective sex-talk *should* be accomplished to ‘save lives’ - disqualified authority of my ‘findings’ (statement 1), and my capacity to give expert advice (statement 2). Findings here referred to an executive summary of truths (evidence-based rather than interpretative or theory-led), and recommendations for ideal (or better) practice.

In a counter-discourse that asserted a binary opposition between childrearing ‘expertise’ (as ideological, as colonial, as political) and ‘experience’ (as ‘private’, everyday lived practice), my authority was further disqualified through exposure of mothering inexperience, viz. childfree status (statement 4). Statements 3 and 4 assumed – misreading Foucauldian resistance, and governmentality – that we might put dubious expertise (or intellectual abstraction) aside, and just get on with the messily real business of mothering, as personal choice, commitment and experience.

As Rose (1992) has argued, this image of ‘scientific progress’, in promising to release us from risk, inexorably binds us to the governmental techniques of institutionalized expertise. This thesis has seen the governmental injunction to communicate more openly with children about sex – not as a fiction, or ideology, but - as a ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ fabricated within particular discursive, social and historical circumstances of HIV/Aids epidemic (cf. Foucault, 1978). My Foucauldian position on ‘regimes of truth’ is aligned here with relativist discourse analytical (or discursive psychological) endeavour concerned with how such truths, realities and expert-facts are constituted as true (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992; Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995; Hepburn, 1999, 2000a; Potter, 1996, 1998, 2003b; Potter, Edwards & Ashmore, 1999); and what the consequences of such ‘truthful’ constructions are for docile and unruly subjects (Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).<sup>1</sup> This deployed a Foucault-inflected notion of ‘risk’ as an expertise-saturated ‘calculated rationality for action’; to read how subjects are drawn into subjectively and socially beneficent government of their own and their children’s conduct (cf. Castel, 1991; Dean, 1994a, 1999; O’Malley, 1999, 2000a).

This is written against critical realist and/or materialist discourse analytical work invested in exposing expert-facts as ideologically-interested misrepresentations (e.g. Parker, 1992, 1998, 1999); possibly incorporating ameliorative interventions to interrupt power abuses (e.g. Willig, 1998, 1999b, 1999c).<sup>2</sup>

Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue – following Foucault – that “one way to undermine a ‘truth’ is not to counterpose it with another ‘truth’, but to examine the discursive process by which true and false statements become distinguished” (p. 67). Fairclough (1995a) would certainly supplement this distinction with the ways in which truthful statements are manufactured, reproduced, circulated and received through media discourse. Situated within an epicentre of advanced HIV/Aids epidemic, my intention was not to counterpoise (wicked) colonial fictions of the psy-complex dicta of (‘child-centered’) childrearing and (‘open’) communication about sex with children against the definitive South African panacea to mother-regulation and youth risk. My intention was rather to intermesh these truths, and their partial successes and failures, within the expert, gendered, racial, acculturated and classed power relations implicated in their government.

This thesis is already overlong. This concluding chapter pulls threads together and unravels others; this will be skimpy, suggestive and selective. It begins with consideration of contributions of the analytical chapters that deploy kinds of ‘subject positioning’ to read Foucauldian government of motherly talk with children about sex through psychological and epidemiological expertise, in peculiarly South African media discourse about HIV/Aids risk conditions. Secondly, it picks up two Foucauldian issues related to the partial operations of power: locating ‘resistances’ to hegemonic positions, and government through ‘moral panic’. Finally, it considers quality-criteria for Foucauldian discourse analytic endeavour, particularly the critical notion of ‘usefulness’.

### **Government through psychological/epidemiological expertise**

Following a Foucauldian line, Rose (1998) theorized three forms of connection between psychological expertise and liberal democratic government, viz. rationality, privacy and



autonomy. Firstly, the exercise of power appears as reasonable, measured and scientifically justifiable. The 'rational and effective' method of institutionalized expertise – for example, the psy-complex, or risk epidemiological science – provides grounded, truthful knowledge claims about problematical phenomena in individuals and populations; and the unfolding technical 'know-how' to prevent and cure, intervene and reform (p. 99).

Secondly, government by 'the Janus-face of expertise' depends on the creation of 'private spaces', seemingly outside of formal political or public authority; but, the micro-practices in these private spaces – such as the family, sex, childrearing – are infused with the macro-interests of State security, health and wealth-generation (p. 100). Elsewhere, Rose (1990) speaks of this as 'familialization', whereby personal capacities and conducts are acted on, at subjective and inter-subjective levels in families, to fabricate socially responsible citizens (p. 126) (cf. Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). (State) concern about the welfare and risk-safety of children thus extends surveillance over and regulation of the family, and mothering (Burman, 1994; Rose, 1990; Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers, 1992).

Thirdly, this form of government works through 'autonomizing' social subjects – that is, the modern self is 'obliged to be free', and to constitute their lives, and elements of their selves, as outcomes of informed choices, and accordant responsibilities, from a range of hegemonic options (Rose, 1998, p. 100). 'Governmental self-formation' operates then by transforming the object – rendered visible, knowable, manageable – into an intentional and reflexive subject who is bound to self-surveillance, self-regulation and self-monitoring (Dean 1994a). The psy-complex gains power through promising, impelling and entrenching 'technologies of individuality', such that selfhood appears as personal choices motivated through deep-felt needs and aspirations, and learning from authentic life-experiences; but is regulated by social objectives through such self-responsibilization and agency (Rose, 1993).

Chapters 6 and 7 worked with these forms of connectivity between expertise and governmental subjectification. These chapters examined 'subject positioning' through adapting Parker's (1992) Neo-Marxist-Lacanian model of interpellation (cf. Althusser, 1971) – to read *Lovelines* texts as 'addressors' of layered, 'double audiences' of middle classed

maternal subjects as *Fairlady*'s primary targets, and their families as secondary consumers (Chapter 5).<sup>3</sup> Following Fairclough (1995a), this deployed didactic media discourse as a risk-panoptic; liberating expert gazes and statements from the therapy room or hospital, and extending the plane of surveillance and normalization to ensnare wider audiences in its governmental tactics through the representational rhetoric of 'persuasion' (cf. collusion). Reading Chapters 6 and 7 together, my analysis of a slightly larger textual corpus, a didactic series of 17 *Lovelines* texts,<sup>4</sup> placed Parker's univocal ideological hailing into a multivalent force field of disjointed and intermeshed representational addresses and inter-subjective positions (Mills, 1997). Thus, different kinds of subject positions, and the relationships and micro-practices between them, were mobilized (or encoded) to shift readers' subjective recognition, identification, intention, rehabilitative action and sustained practice from dispreferred towards preferred positioning (cf. Hall, 1997).

Chapter 6 examined how inter-subjective positioning was achieved through broad ideological strokes, establishing prevailing 'structural' positions – mothers, 'adolescents', men and 'safe families' – in relation to expertise, parental custodianship, (risky) heterosexual inter-subjectivities, and power. Such tiered positions were invested with febrile powers of oversight (over one another); powers of resistance, recalcitrance and plainly wrong action; and also – in positioning of women (*not* men, see below) – powers of amelioration, malleability and manoeuvrability within discursive limits. Normal-problematical positions appeared – the sexually uncommunicative mother, the risky teenage daughter – and were transmuted into ideally-risk-safe positions through corrective application of expert (talking cure) techniques. The subjective reformation was conceived to move in preferred directions inscribed by expertise, towards closer approximations of risk-safety. Given the primary and secondary reaches of *Fairlady*'s familial/gendered audience, parallax address tilted constantly between 'maternal', 'sexually active woman' and 'teenage-girl' identified reading positions, thereby constituting surfaces of inter-subjective surveillance between them – and also establishing the discursive limits of their 'relationships' with others/men (Smith, 1990; Žizek, 1989).

Also as a condition of *Fairlady's* gendered audience, talking about (safer) sex with children (and men partners) was taken-for-granted as feminized work. This truth-construction appeared to be propped up in the *Lovelines* series through a weave of psychological and epidemiological discourses, and inter-subjective positioning that constituted 'relationships' (Mills, 1997; Smith, 1990).<sup>5</sup> This became the standard rhetorical tactic of persuasion of maternal responsabilization for public and personal sexual risk-safety through talking about sex. The inter-subjective figure (to mother, to men/boys) of the risk-infested girl-victim appeared repeatedly as a truth-totem to tell facts, to cajole, to shame and blame, to scare, and to oblige self-awareness, sexual responsibility, and healthy talking and modeling. This truth-construction was mobilized in several ways in *Lovelines* – for example, psy-complex dicta on 'our sexual natures' and 'adolescence', referrals to experts, research statistics on prevalence/risk patterning, mono-causal narratives of 'effects' – that bound mothers to the 'know-how' of expertise.

Thus, the globally hegemonic storm-and-stress model of adolescence loomed large and truthful in governing mothering through *Lovelines*. It normalized and universalized 'adolescence' as naturally unfolding, biologized development (e.g. Burman, 1994). It saturated adolescent subject positions with sex, and risk; and as such, colluded with pockets of South African HIV/Aids research that reproduce prevalence of unprotected sex, unwanted pregnancy and HIV-infection, as 'youth problems' (Chapter 4). It applied this patterning of sex/risk to *all* South African adolescents, irrespective of class, culture, race or locality – and so forcefully *incorporated* raced-white, middle classed adolescents within HIV/Aids and teenage pregnancy risk-categories. Incorporating psychoanalytic truths, it cast mother-child dyads and nuclear families as 'containers' for the dynamics of normal sexuality development, with its libidinal transferences and rebellions (Foucault, 1978; Lupton & Tulloch, 1998). This preferred figure of adolescence required 'responsive' maternal subjectivities to provide formative custodial care through particular kinds of childrearing praxis (Dean, 1994a).

Such blunt-edged universalism was generally taken as feature and function of purposive mass communication, where the opening of nuanced 'loopholes' in blanket-risk permit

resistance, exceptions to the rules, and unruly/unsafe escapes (e.g. Kelly et al., 2001; J. Kitzinger, 1998a, 1998b; Naidoo & Wills, 2000). But, as I have suggested, it was the risky *girl-child* that transfixed expertise, and was used to galvanize mothering – protectively of girls, and formatively of boys as men-in-the-making. Macleod's (1999) analysis of the 'governmentality' of teenage pregnancy in South Africa found girls simultaneously included as 'adolescents', and excluded as 'feminine', from the discourse of sexual experimentation; she was both 'sexually active' *and* a passive recipient of coercive external influences (p. 309). My reading of gendered power relations in *Lovelines* found girls inter-subjectively stymied by non-malleable, non-dialogical about sex/risk, normal-problematical masculine positions, viz. the scoundrel man and macho-posturing boy; from which or whom there was no apparent subjective respite. Thus, no alternative subjective positioning, or narrative or interactive trajectory of manoeuvrability, of masculinities appeared in *Lovelines*, and as such these scoundrel-positions, as discursive, structural and ideological limits, were normatively determined, sanctioned and reproduced by expertise.

Wilton (1997) believed such textual tactics 'removed' heterosexual men/boys from the HIV/Aids discursive field; I take a more Foucauldian (than feminist) position.<sup>6</sup> Figuring heterosexual men as spectacularly unconscionable, unreasonable, irresponsible, structurally unchangeable and inter-subjectively inevitable *presences*, operates as a rhetorically persuasive *and* ideological tactic of government of women's responsabilization for risk-protection; and impels and inscribes women's ameliorative, often subtle, subjective manoeuvring *around* men as apparent risk-machines (cf. Smith, 1990). The risky girl-victim was thus constantly re-placed, inter-subjectively, into her mother's protective custody. It is communication with mothers that was constituted as (dyadic) 'safety', rather than the sexually unsafe families, and risk-societies, they both inhabit.<sup>7</sup> This bound them subjectively and inter-subjectively to the governmental techniques of psychological expertise.

### Disciplinary powers run around (and aground)

Chapter 6 examined the ideological collusions around structural subject positions and inscription of responsibilities through persuasion by expertise – that talking about sex by

mothers with children, and by women with men partners, inoculated *everybody* (including the body politic), as *all-and-each*, against risk of HIV/Aids. Chapter 7 then turned to the installation of expert-sanctioned techniques of inter-subjective communication, as subjectification through micro-practices of disciplinary power. The curricula or scripts of conversations about sex with children – (a) their pedagogical tactics of orchestrated spontaneity and (seemingly) egalitarian discussion within ‘teachable moments’; (b) their psy-complex praxes about the centrality of sexuality to selves and self-esteems, insinuated into minutiae of everyday family-living; and (c) their sustained vagueness of sexological, erotic or safer-sex-technical registers, overlaid by pervasive epidemiological prevalence/risk information that (tactically) rendered *all sex* scary – were familiar from international and local literature reviews (Chapters 3 & 4).

But, after the stoic limits of structural subject positions and crystallized end-points of power in the inter-subjective relationships between positions (in Chapter 6), my reading of *Lovelines*’ micro-practices of disciplinary power displayed unruly representations of resistances, inversions, manoeuvres and twists that swarmed around and across the above ‘curricula’, and worried at the established structural subject positions within family cells.<sup>8</sup> Expertise was seen scrambling to cover, defuse and re-mediate, all eventualities of ‘unwillingness’ to talk about sex (e.g. mothers’ ‘dread’, teenagers’ eye-rolling, men’s taciturnity), and all opportunities for inter-subjective conflict around sex (e.g. don’t shout back, choose an appropriate moment, demand an HIV-test, condom-refusal), with institutionalized sex-conversational techniques – as preferred, ideal or more ‘effective’ tactics.

Of course, this was not a mechanical procedure due to the unstable, heterogeneous and reversible microphysics of power (cf. Hindess, 1996). Established relations of power and authority between prevailing subject positions were momentarily turned around, even messed up. For example, young people knew more about sex than their flustered parents; and mothers were implicated in gossipy confessions to inscrutable daughters about their own sexual experiences, or found condoms in their children’s pockets while sorting the family-laundry.

Such turnabouts were produced through evocation, in *Lovelines*, of a counter-discourse about adolescence – as ‘youth culture’ (Chapter 1) – that fabricated sexually agentic and knowing young people, whose pivotal inter-subjective reference points were peers/friends rather than (solely) parental authority (cf. Wyness, 2000). This polyvocality of representational address of youth *and* their mothers overlaid contradictory storm-and-stress and youth-culture positions of risk-vulnerability, emotional turmoil, sexual activation, sexual responsibility and branded (healthy) lifestyle consciousness as multivalent forms of subjectification *and* resistance. This served both to undercut and amplify imperatives for ‘sensitive’ custodianship, and pastoral-maternal homilies about sex. While *Lovelines*-expertise constantly re-cycled HIV/Aids risk-information, and sex-talking techniques, the psy-complex shaping of the particular kind of ‘relationship’ with children – within which such autonomizing sex pedagogization could happen – was apparently taken-for-granted of its (mostly) raced-white and middle classed audience (Chapter 4).

Parker’s (1992) guidelines for his so-called ‘Foucauldian’ analysis of discourses in texts – incorporating Althusser’s (1971) concept of interpellation as subject positioning praxis – have been found to manufacture top-down, deterministic and univocal readings of the oppressive ‘ideological effects’ of discourse practice (e.g. Hepburn, 2003).<sup>9</sup> As I suggested in Chapter 5, Parker’s Marxist takes on (ruling-classed, oppressive) power and (duped) subjectivities drive critical analyses bent on truth-seeking and social transformation beyond or underneath misshapen textual representations.

My analyses in Chapters 6 and 7 have ‘moved back’ to Foucault through supplementing Parkerian tools, to usher in inter-textual and inter-discursive polyvocality of hailing in didactic media discourse; as apparently risk-ameliorative subjective malleability is inscribed on women, in time of epidemic. There is (of course) ideological work in this. But, my readings have counterpoised prevailing, discursively and structurally determined, and power-relational, subject positions, with the ‘humble modalities’, ‘minor procedures’ and restless resistances and contradictions of disciplinary power within *lived micro-practices* in family cells (cf. Foucault, 1977; see Chapter 2). Macro-relations were mostly held fast; but within and around those straining seams, adjustments, amendments, re-fashioning,

appropriated techniques, tactical manoeuvres, lapses, unwillingness, recalcitrance, and more policing (as re-inscription and repair by expertise) constantly reappeared in the *Lovelines* textual series.

### Talking about texts about talking about sex: resistance and partial persuasions

Staying with this power-filled binocle of Foucauldian subjectivity - macro *and* micro, steadfast *and* unstable, docile *and* resistant - Chapter 8 changed tack methodologically and read *talk* about a *Lovelines* text. This shift was derived through a weave of two approaches to subject positioning, viz. Fairclough's and Wetherell's, which produced complementary insights. Fairclough's (1995a) notion of 'media discourse practice' holds that texts are (a) produced (or 'encoded') and (b) distributed with particular consuming subjects in mind, to *do* particular things to/with those subjects (e.g. entertain, inform, persuade).<sup>10</sup> A third leg of this subject positioning practice is then (c) text-consumption, referring to how preferred meanings are variously appropriated by readers, and fragile hegemonies wrought through rhetorical persuasion (by expertise, in this instance). Having proselytized this comprehensive model, Fairclough's analytical work – wittingly, for expedience – focused on textual practices in single media texts (see criticisms: Garrett & Bell, 1998; Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002; Richardson, 1998). Thus, Chapter 8 spoke directly to gap (c) (cf. Chouliaraki, 1998).

An assemblage of teachers and parents – *not* the customarily targeted audience of *Fairlady/Lovelines* – discussed (in a decidedly academic context) a *Lovelines* text in relation to their own parenting experience/practice. This opened a space of 'reader reception' – parents talking back to childrearing and risk expertise – that produced invaluable, and rare in discursive analyses of Foucauldian governmentality, moments of rupture in what is often (mistakenly) assumed to be seamless, top-down power/knowledge inscription onto subjects. As I showed in Chapters 1 and 4, mass mediated didactic texts were found to produce a simplistic binary of 'effects' - either accorded extraordinary power to determine preferred meanings/actions (e.g. by Marxists); or contrarily, dismissed as virtually powerless, 'useless' or 'ineffective' (e.g. by some public health activists).

In Chapter 8, my readings of discussants' reflexive positions (as 'I-statements') in relation to expert, psy-complex discourses of sex-talking with children produced contradictory, uneven, manoeuvrable and resistant/alternative accounts of parenting experiences. These were complex and piecemeal appropriations of expertise; and disciplinary subjectification appeared to shift as parents learnt from experience and transgression, and were challenged by their own children (and other figures, or discourses) within changing familial, socio-political, classed and HIV/Aids risk conditions in South Africa.

Wetherell's (1998) 'synthetic' approach was used to examine the negotiation of maternal subjectivities through positioning in narrative interactions. Here subject positions, as 'locations' in conversations, focused on (syntagmatic) tactics of manoeuvre, defense, recasting, qualification or resistance in give-and-take accounts of themselves and others; against (paradigmatic) structural or institutional positions in prevailing discourses or power relations that pose limits. Given the conditions of manufacture of the discussion – for example, media text as stimulus material, unfamiliar people in heterogeneous groups, an academic context, my constitutive role as lecturer and researcher – interactive positioning around (reflexive statements about personal) parenting practices, and talking about sex with children, tended to be (with a few exceptions) cautious, bitty, and agreeably consensual in moments of resistance. This was so with respect to gender, where *Lovelines'* maternal responsabilization of mothers for sex-talk with children was roundly castigated – even if (contradictorily) women/mothers reported usually ending up doing it anyway, seemingly out of opportunistic proximal convenience rather than strategic distributive injustice (cf. Dixon & Wetherell, 2004).

The sections analyzing gendered positioning of communication about sex were cut from Chapter 8 because they mapped similar discursive trajectories and terrains to Chapters 6 and 7; and because they were overlaid with (more interesting) peculiarly South African, 'ideological dilemmas' around race, culture, class and childrearing. These dilemmas fractured power, stumbled over 'political correctness', and produced conflicted, choked and (sometimes) confrontational moments in position-negotiation. My 'postcolonial' analysis of



this talk worked with Stoler's (1995) idea that the pedagogization of children's sexuality is (also) the racialization of it (Chapter 4). Thus, for example, African speakers articulated – and policed – acculturated positions (e.g. 'in my culture...'; or 'cultural taboos' on sex-talking); and were entitled to speak *for* or *against* these cultural traditions in their current repositioning as (newly) class-mobile, sexually enlightened and responsible South African citizens. Talking openly about sex with children was figured – in colonial terms of modernizing progress – as (adopting) 'the ways of whites'; sometimes risky in itself, against the grain of culture/community and against abject and humiliating experiences of personal and public 'failure', e.g. their own, or their daughters', events of unwanted teenage pregnancy.

The veneer that held 'class', 'race' and 'culture' apart as distinctive identity positions was fragile; and was fraught for white speakers to negotiate, as they apparently 'dis-identified' with such markers (cf. colonial whiteness as class-, race-, and culture-free: Foster, 2004; Stoler, 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). With the exception of reflexively Christian-identified speakers, who opted for culturally relativist positions on diverse familial deployments of sex, white speakers tended to close down slippery and threatening talk about 'differences'. Instead, they took up positions that inscribed global universals, similarities between all individuals, and alliance with psy-complex theories (e.g. defensiveness about talking about sex as a generalized rather than culture-bound truth-phenomenon: cf. psychoanalytic discourse). In one telling interactive negotiation between white academicians, a (culturally relativist) position 'protecting' Africanized cultural-taboo on talking with children about sex was challenged as racist, because similar reverential exoticization was not accorded so-called 'screwed-up white-defensiveness' about sex in middle-class, functionally nuclear families.<sup>11</sup>

*Lovelines'* trajectory of persuasive positioning is now familiar: mothers should talk openly/intimately to daughters about sex, to protect them from risks of pregnancy and HIV/Aids (Chapters 6 & 7). The above 'talk' took elements of this truth-construction for granted – for example, that sex communication was subjectively beneficial, and essential in a time of HIV/Aids, as risk-prevention. But around these consensual principles, persuasions

by rhetorical tactics, by experts' tricks, were patchy; resistances roiled; and disciplinary power ran this way and that as alternative positions/practices were inter-subjectively renegotiated in relation to their particular material/lived circumstances (that were marked as *not* textually depicted in *Lovelines*), and within the interactive audience of the discussions themselves. Others have noted that speakers in discussion groups seek to account for their positions/practices – as self-presentation – in discursively coherent, and 'socially desirable' ways (cf. Pattman & Chege, 2003; Wyness, 2000: see Chapters 3 & 4); but that these contingent accounts were inevitably fragmented, incomplete and shift (Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Following Foucault, Miller and Rose (1993) note that disciplinary tactics of government 'are rarely implanted unscathed', because 'realities' are too heterogeneous to be pinned down by theories and ambitions of singular and/or rivalrous health promotional programmes (p. 79). As I showed in Chapter 1, encoded textual invitations may be opposed through other discursive positions (e.g. Alldred, 1996a); or be taken up in contradictory ways that accept messaging in principle, but resist its practical implications and use in lived relations (e.g. J. Kitzinger, 1998b; Nettleton, 1997; Smith, 1990).

But Mills (1997) has rightly warned of reification of the Foucauldian resistance to didactic textual meanings, such that it veers away from localized, inflammatory moments towards (valorized) flat refusal or unilateral tactics across sites or strategies of power.<sup>12</sup> Chapter 7 'located' resistances, as their anticipation and dissolution by expertise, in the *Lovelines* texts themselves; and in Chapter 8, unfolding resistances were produced through interactive talk about texts and parenting, and through the resources that this assemblage of astute, media-literate speakers brought to bear on such tasks (cf. Hall, 1997). Fairclough's (1995a) distinction between ideological and rhetorically persuasive functions of media discourse is useful in that it finds resistance flaring up at multiplicative levels, but also explains the stickiness of status quo. Thus, resistance does not imply escape from inscription by (psy-complex) expertise; its operations and effects customarily swarmed around the smaller rhetorical, disciplinary, technical, contextual and ethical details of this inscription.

Rose (1998) finds the manoeuvrability of governmentality to operate through two key features. First, multi-voiced hailing works partially and in piecemeal fashion, is intricately entangled with resistances, appears to be on the (perpetual) point of failing, and must thus be constantly reiterated. I return to this idea shortly (cf. 'moral panic'). Second, disciplinary power connects subjectivities to politics and ethics, in that individuals are linked into 'a social field not primarily through restraint or injunction, but through regulated acts of choice' (p. 98). Within such social arrangements of subjective practice, individuals are fabricated who are committed to shaping, managing and expressing 'their worth and value as selves' (p. 98). Their judicious resistances – as negotiated manoeuvres and rationalized (individualized) choices – style, through psychological vocabularies infused with political responsibilities, 'ethical' personal identities (cf. Foucault, 1988), e.g. a 'sensitive parent' committed to maximizing children's potentials and opportunities through managing risk-safety and quality of life.

#### Moral panics, media discourse, social control

I argued in Chapters 6 and 7 that the (repeated) mobilization in *Lovelines* of dramatic and dire risk-configurations of 'adolescents' – as immature, troubled, easily led astray by peers, hyper-sexually active, rebellious, etc. - called forth, inter-subjectively, a particular kind of parent and parenting as familial custodianship, to 'discipline' such young people (cf. Dean, 1994a). Such hailing through media discourse was relentlessly pitched at 'unwilling' communicators about sex - dysfunctional mothers *and* teenagers, women *and* men - and recycled the bottom-line, risk-staunching imperative of dialogue at every turn. My analysis in Chapter 8 demonstrated that discussants reflexively positioned themselves as 'docile' and 'ethical' subjects – as more or less *willing* communicators – although other resistances to persuasion appeared, including being 'offended' by *Lovelines* mother-positioning and mother-blame, and the expert-techniques of sex-talking touted. Thus, discussants presented themselves as 'appropriating' communication according to the *particular* contextual territories of lived experiences and contingencies of their parenting and custodianship.

However, from a Foucauldian governmental perspective, the point of such didactic media texts about sexual health is *not* about recognizing these partially docile appropriations of bits of expertise as heartening evidences of 'successes'; but instead to relentlessly patrol the outer subjective/societal limits of transgression through threats and anxieties about 'failure' (e.g. 'spiraling' prevalence statistics, 'non-responsive' or 'promiscuous' youth, 'catastrophic' Aids-deaths, 'pervasive' risk, 'silences' around sex: cf. Parker, 2005a). As Rose (1990) has argued, this figured, feared collapse of moral discipline and social order, constantly reiterates 'the need to take firm steps to prevent a downward spiral into disorder and chaos' (p. 123). Such 'firm steps' of prevention legitimize more regulatory action *from parents* – using ever more benign- and democratic-seeming parenting techniques to 'discipline' children's sex and sexualities to avert trouble or disaster; and it legitimizes more regulation (by expertise) of the conduct *of parental conduct* as a tactic of their government as relay points (cf. Burman, 1994; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

Along these lines, much has been made in critical media research on HIV/Aids-coverage about the relationship between 'interests' of media institutions, the State, and publics/audiences. The term 'moral panic' was originally used to refer to mechanisms of social control in which media participate through repetitively amplifying deviancy and threat of disorder, to win public support for increasingly coercive regulatory restriction by (State) authorities and/or institutional experts (Cohen, 1972; Hall et al., 1978).<sup>13</sup> As I argued in Chapter 1 with regards encoding/decoding, Hall's (1980) earlier analyses overplayed 'media power' as an Ideological State Apparatus that univocally determined preferred meanings (cf. Althusser, 1971). It is thus naïve to assert strategic instrumentality between reactionary media *misrepresentations*, audiences of subjects who believe and react to them (in increasingly emphatic, authoritarian, restrictive ways), and State-interests that are served through such consent and collusion (Stevenson, 1995). Schools of thought and disciplinary splits around moral panic appear, and Foucauldian positioning is entangled, and fragmented, within and between them.

On the one hand, empirical media-effects schools – such as the Glasgow Media Group (D. Miller et al., 1998) – have disavowed 'moral panics' in HIV/Aids-coverage (in

British media) on grounds that conspiratorial collusions between State-interests and media discourse, and duped-puppet audiences, are difficult to 'find' or 'prove' through available investigative machinery (e.g. content analyses, reception studies, tracing text-production procedures). Foucault would concur this, as does Fairclough's (1995a) position, which this thesis (mostly) espoused. But, Miller et al. (1998) also raise concerns about fuzzy applications of moral panics to HIV/Aids that ignore (a) how such panics 'subside' or are 'rolled back'; and (b) who exactly is doing the 'stirring up' and the 'panicking'? (p. 215-6). I provide Foucauldian ripostes to (a) and (b) below.

On the other hand, 'ideological' media-analyses of HIV/Aids-representations have deployed 'moral panic' as synonymous with suspicions about media manipulation (e.g. risk-groupings that actively reproduce homophobic and stigmatizing public responses: Altman, 1986; Lupton, 1994; Patton, 1996; Watney, 1988; Weeks, 1989; Wilton, 1997). This view resonates with (b) above. But these authors seem to use moral panics to address, in varying ways, the connective capillary-threads of ideological work between mediated representations of risk, social practices of stigma, policy-making for populations, institutional expertise *and* micro-practices of lived action or experience. Along these lines, Squire (1997) has argued that '[AIDS] science is always conducted in part against cultural panic; it declares itself the regulator of AIDS panic' (p. 52). These analytics are (often inexplicitly) aligned with the pervasive, loose-limbed ways, means and effects of Foucauldian powers.

I conclude with two points about the place of moral panics in Foucauldian governmentality (cf. Rose, 1990). These points are caught somewhat adrift here without the genealogical and institutional-ethnography chapters that were excised from this thesis; but are salient still to (governing) maternal subjectification. First (a), rolling moral panics (plural) do not appear as singular 'scandals' that dissipate in sight of 'the truth' (D. Miller et al., 1998). They are intermeshed crises of power – as was suggested in Chapters 3 and 8, as nexus between 'crises' of shifting models of childhood, parenting and families, HIV/Aids – and emerge at points of power's apparent splintering, incompleteness and impotence (cf. carceral system: Foucault, 1977; see

Chapter 2). This places institutions, didactic texts, subject positions and discursive practices as disciplinary sites and surfaces of *ongoing* knowledge-production, incorporation, wrangling and transgression in relation to risk-prevention. Normalization and risk-vigilance must be *constantly* and *repetitively* redone – and didactic media discourse serves this function as predictable and anxious optic (Fairclough, 1995a).

Second (b), (maternal) agency is constituted through governmentality, and that productive force of power is *engineered* through, rather than closed down by, moral panics about youth risk in the *Lovelines* series. However, Foucault's micro-circuited matrix of power defeats attempts to find and judge 'the individual responsible' for its effects (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). While moral panics were traditionally conceived to serve the interests of the panic-mongers (cf. Cohen, 1972), in the multiplicative fashioning of 'ethically risk-pledged' lifestyles of individuals and populations, such interests, intentions, or their counter-strokes, are not clearly associated with centralized (extra-discursive) agencies (Dean, 1994a).

My analysis in Chapters 7 and 8 demonstrated this multidirectional valence of power within inter-subjectivities as disciplinary techniques and surveillances turned around, reflected back and moved between. The Foucauldian lens finds moral panics as frissons of power over which no-one has direct control – not State, institutions, public health activists, media text-producers, parents or youth – but, there are multifarious *uses* and *effects* to be (non-subjectively) harnessed (Rose, 1990). If moral panics are to be 'deployed' as media-textual shock tactics to 'mobilize' particular kinds of parenting, then they must be continually repeated, and transmuted and reinvented, to sustain their persuasive force.

## 2. DISCOURSE ANALYTICAL MATTERS

### Genealogical boundary-crossings: multi-texts, multi-tools

This thesis suffered from delusions of Foucauldian grandeur, as hubris. Its intent and design was conceived as a loosely-genealogical mapping of a *dispositif* (discursive apparatus of government) – as working with a contemporaneous problematic in a particular slice through media discourse, and tracking this back and forth: skimming the layered, surfaces of these texts and the minutiae of micro-practices they impel, but through different angles, procedures of positioning, and historical frames; and brandishing different analytics as tools, lenses, maps. This crisscrossing intended to construct around a particular communicative event – a *Lovelines* text, a conversation about sex between a mother and daughter - what Foucault (1991b) has called a ‘polyhedron of intelligibility’; where the crystal-like multiplication of surfaces refracted both the ‘constitution’ of this event, and its conditions of possibility (p. 77).

This was fatefully mimicked through Fairclough’s (1995a) model of media discourse, operating at levels of textual, discourse and socio-cultural *practice* – intended to fashion subject positioning through intermeshed procedures of text-production, distribution and consumption. Thus, media discourse was understood as chains of procedures and arrangements that fabricate textual effects of constituting objects, subjects, relationships and worldviews.

The paradox of writing this thesis then – the abridged version - was that its sprawling genealogical intent to unpack governmentality remained intact, even while more and more of its crucially constitutive scaffolding inter-textual work on historicized and institutional *practices*, as conditions of possibility/manufacture, as rules of formation, was cut away due to space constraints. This analytical work will be re-territorialized elsewhere; and the absent traces of historicity and media-institutionalized procedures (cf. Fairclough, 2001) were drawn into this thesis (only) through reviews of historicized, theoretical and empirical literatures (Chapters 2, 3 & 4). From a Foucauldian perspective, these realms of material

practice and 'real life' are *not* separable as something beyond or underneath discourse (or texts); *nor* that discourse is all there is (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). But, texts and talk become expedient (end-point) objects of preoccupation here. As Dean (1999) has argued, unpicking government 'attempts to show that our taken-for-granted ways of doing things... are not entirely self-evident or necessary' (p. 21); but are a consequence (or accident) of local conditions. This thesis has situated expert texts about motherly talking to children about sex in time of HIV/Aids epidemic, and talk about such texts and talk, in this plane of sight.

As a discourse analytical endeavour, this thesis paid attention to statuses of discourse; it applied different 'techniques' of reading subject positioning that were respectful of the particular *form* of discourse (as texts). This approach was not innovative. The exponential growth of technically and theoretically sophisticated specialization of discourse analytical enterprise has produced many 'applied' volumes/manuals, where chapters operationalize *particular* analytical tactics to do *particular* things with *particular* texts in vastly different content-domains; and to unpack potentials and problems through context-specific and tool-specific analytical praxes (e.g. Antaki, 1988; Bell & Garrett, 1998; Burman & Parker, 1993b; Parker & Bolton Discourse Network, 1999; Van Dijk, 1985b, 1997; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001a; Willig, 1999a; Wodak & Meyer, 2001).<sup>14</sup> This approach resists generic models of discourse analytic tactics that are applied, in generally 'outmoded' ways of 'thematic analysis', to any/all discourse, from interviews, to discussions, to advice columns (Mills, 1997; I. Parker, 2005; see also Chapter 5).

This thesis held steady the attention to a discourse-problematic as content-domain – *Lovelines*-expertise, inter-generational communication about sex as risk-prophylactic - and mapped its textual surfaces, interactive interstices and its positioning work, in various technical ways.<sup>15</sup> Thus, aside from showing how the discursive machinery of subjectification works *partially* through didactic media discourse, through (a) a politics of representation (encoding) and appropriation (decoding), and (b) government-from-a-far by expertise; this thesis was explicitly concerned with the manufacture of particular kinds of knowledge through disparate discourse analytical engagements.



Following on from Foucault's (1972, 1978) writing on 'speaking subjects', this thesis delimited three appropriations of 'Foucauldian' subject positioning (Chapter 5). I sought to cross boundaries between discourse analytical approaches, and to counterpoise two different reading tactics of subject positioning – Parker's (1992) interpellation (with texts-as-data), and Wetherell's (1998) synthetic approach (with interactive-talk-as-data) - without seeking to integrate them. There was no slavish following of analytical recipes in my explicitly Foucauldian deployments. Chapter 6 and 7 amplified Parker's univocal hailing into a multivoiced cacophony, dumped *mis*representations, and supplemented his singular texts with an inter-textual, didactic corpus. Chapter 8 pushed Wetherell's interactive positioning up against Fairclough's reflexive reader positions, to examine talk about expert-advice about talk (see above sections).

Potter (2003b) argues that the category discourse analysis is 'both boon and encumbrance' (p. 784); boon in the above sense of an active space in which different kinds of work can complement, intersect and jostle;<sup>16</sup> and encumbrance in that 'mixing' discourse analyses in a multi-perspectival way – as different 'disciplines', 'models', 'methods' – unleashes disjunctive terminologies and analytical praxes in which statuses of discourse, ideology, real objects, power, and subjects' agency constantly shift (Chapter 5).<sup>17</sup> For example, within a broadly Foucauldian ambit, 'reality' means to Parker (1998) an extra-discursive realm, e.g. race, families, poverty; and to Wetherell and Potter (1992), talk and action welded together as social practice, e.g. racist discourse. This means that attempts to clump-together or counterpoise discourse analytical approaches runs into trouble with 'coherence'; and requires fraught, picky, qualificatory argumentation – such as my paradigmatic framings in Chapter 5 – which is intellectually laborious, and irrevocably lengthy. Discourse praxis itself becomes the reflexive focal point,<sup>18</sup> or monopolizes space within cramped publication limits, which occludes the 'topic' being investigated (Parker & Burman, 1993; Potter, 2002). Furthermore, it is difficult to decide by what/whose epistemological criteria of 'good research practice' the mix or counter-position will be judged.

While general standards for good 'qualitative research' still operate – for example, detailing context/methods, situating a study in relation to previously published work, negative case

analysis, thick description, clarifying researcher perspectives, evidence supplied for interpretations, etc. – writing on quality procedures and products has become increasingly ‘paradigmatic’ (e.g. Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Willig, 2001). This means that different traditions of qualitative inquiry are ‘read’ against tradition-inflected criteria, and by particular disciplinary audiences. Kvale (1996) has called these ‘interpretive communities of validation’, distinguishing the appeals of coherent accountability, and critical awareness or argument, pitched at disparate audiences of research participants, general publics, and theoretically allegiant models/institutions (pp. 213-8). This approach highlights – as I have demonstrated in this thesis – that theoretical, methodological, technical and rhetorical ‘coherence’ is crafted to particular ends/audiences; and that this is an ongoing process of reframing, critique and reflexivity, not simply ‘tagged on at the end’ (Taylor, 2001).

### On usefulness and uselessness

What tends to be tagged on at the end of discourse analytical endeavour is consideration of the ‘usefulness’ of the study: as the ‘fruitfulness’ of ideas in informing further interrogatory projects to stretch or inform theory (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Wood & Kroger, 2000); or as some kind of ‘application’ to real conditions of oppression that ‘endure when texts stop’ (Parker & Burman, 1993, p. 158). This criterion illustrates the epistemological tensions between relativist and critical realist (or materialist) approaches to the relationship between discursive critique and social transformation. These tensions were inscribed throughout this thesis as my intellectual and Foucauldian readings of *partial* persuasion by representations were pushed up against the either-or truth claims – does *Lovelines* work, or not? – associated with the urgent effects-models of mass communication interventions in time of HIV/Aids epidemic (Chapter 1 & 4).

Willig (1999b) articulates a Marxist/materialist position in her active calls for discourse analytical work to drive or guide practical and radical interventions into status quo social conditions and relations. Her analysis of (*mis*representational) ‘discursive constructions of sex’ produces recommendations for different practices ‘beyond analysis of language’, that are geared towards: designing and implementing training workshops to reconstitute

empowered subjectivities, through active promotion of counter-discourses and positions; and broader social reform through informing 'sex educational' campaigning strategies<sup>19</sup> and lobbying to challenge/influence institutional policy making (Willig, 1999c). This thesis has hopefully exposed the naivete, and impudence, of such self-righteous positioning when situated within the multivalent force field of the South African HIV/Aids epidemic, with its multiplicative, rivalrous campaigns competing for funding/effects; its disciplinary and professional splits between 'intellectual' and 'activist' realms of cultural studies/public health enterprise;<sup>20</sup> and its patchiness of risk, and the inequitable resources (including access to media discourse or State health services) that are brought to bear on risk-avoidance.

Having been gainfully employed within a systemic public health institution associated with tuberculosis and HIV/Aids services in primary health care clinics, I am cognizant of the policy-wrangling, expedient truth-constructions of 'evidence', funding-politics and complex, multi-faceted interventions/evaluations that sustain such apparatuses. I am also more tolerant towards their situated operations and useful effects than 'they' are towards my own theoretical, 'sharp' readings of delimited texts. However, this does not mean my readings are useless, either to public health audiences or others.

Many implications for practice have appeared through my analytical literature reviews, and my analyses of ideological, discursive, and negotiated positioning. This thesis has fractured (ideological) assumptions about, for example, (a) the sole-responsibilization of parents for HIV/Aids risk prophylaxis of their children in modern societies; (b) the gendering of this familial-responsibilization of women, for childrearing, and communication about sex and risk; (c) deficit models of adolescence of the western psy-complex that centralize sex as an axis of subjectivity; (d) the notion of parental and youthful 'willingness' (or 'unwillingness') to talk about sex; and (e) direct-effects schools of purposive media campaigning. Following 'Foucauldian-feminist discourse analysts' – loosely speaking – I have marked and resisted the intersecting oppressions of such constructions (e.g. Gavey, 1989; Maceod, 1999; Strebel, 1997; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Some room for manoeuvre among alternative positions flared out along the way; but my intention was/is *not* to assert these particular manoeuvres

as generalized, reified, truthful forms of 'escape' from, or as 'other' hegemonies within, the HIV/Aids risk-field.

I seek then to 'place' these manoeuvres within a swirling, multifarious and multivoiced matrix of other options, programmes, interventions, discourses, practices, resources, resistances, *and* all forms of writing about these, within conditions of epidemic. This forges intricate lattices of intersection between risk-reductive activism 'at the coalface' of (narrow or complex) interventions, and work that picks through complex (socio-structural, normative, ideological) mediating environments 'upstream'. As Wetherell and Potter (1992) comment, this positions discourse analytical work as 'simultaneously crucial and trivial' (p. 219), as its sharp words weave into and between others, and constantly comment on how (all) discourse runs into trouble. This thesis has explored the racialization of sex pedagogies within risk- and mothering-discourse in this (troubling) regard. Fairclough (1995b) advocates 'critical language awareness' – through media discourse practices – that enables speakers/writers to identify limits of dominant discourses, and to negotiate empowering situated alternatives that extend opportunities for action (p. 217).

Along these lines of fight (rather than flight), W. Parker and Kelly (2001) argue that 'writing the epidemic' – by way of meta-commentary – becomes an active space of critique and exploration of how media discourse may be 'used' to provoke action and promote change in multiple, decentralized ways. This then is a contribution of representational, critical social scientific work on subject positioning in an epidemic – to challenge divisions between theory and practice, and binaries between risk-safety and harm. We have, and are had by, the multivalent powers of words; and the last words have not been spoken/written.

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<sup>1</sup> This anti-foundationalist, or 'radically emic', view of truth/knowledge about objects and subjects may be operationalized in a genealogical project, such as Foucault's (Chapter 5), where historicized 'manufacture' of phenomena are mapped through an archive of traces/statements to appear as conventionalized 'regimes of truth'; or in various kinds of analytical examinations of

contemporaneous (scientific) texts or interactive argumentation, where particular versions of knowledge (and positions) are presented, defended, mobilized, marginalized or challenged.

<sup>2</sup> My introductory argument runs out of elbow-room for disclaiming qualifications; and unfortunately caricatures as a binary opposition approaches that have addressed the complex relationship between discursive critique and 'usefulness' (cf. Willig, 1999c). Potter, Edwards and Ashmore (1999) have critically cast this stereotypical valuational typology of discourse analyses as those *bad* relativists (or deconstructionists) who do not spell out how oppressive practices may be changed; and those *good* critical realists (and materialists) who are committed to transformative social action/intervention around empowerment and structural reform, beyond discourse/texts (Chapter 5). Potter has consistently denied the validity of this opposition. I return to this later on, to expose the work of discursive critique of truth-effects as fairly blurry and shifty between these so-called poles (cf. Hepburn, 1999, 2000a; Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b).

<sup>3</sup> *Fairlady's* primary target audience was identified as middle-classed, 52% white, married/divorced women, about 35 years old, probably part-time working mothers; the secondary audience refers to the individuals of various ages who have access to the *Fairlady* magazine mothers/women bring into the family cell, including adolescent girls (Chapter 5).

<sup>4</sup> My analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 focused on the *Lovelines* corpus/series, although the words and arguments were unpacked singularly, in fairly close semiotic/discursive detail. I contrast the overall effect – all my single text analyses read together – with Parker's (and Fairclough's) readings of isolated texts here.

<sup>5</sup> I refer here, in a Foucauldian sense, to textualized subject positions placed in power relation with one another, such as a custodial deployment, mother-daughter, or sexual alliance, woman-man (cf. Hall, 1997). Smith (1990) then sees readers invited to negotiate the discursive limits of such 'textualized relationships', rather than simply adopting an offered subject position. This is different to Hollway's (1984a) psychoanalytical Object Relations positioning of people placed in psychical object/subject relations to one another in that my use is explicitly discursive and textual (cf. Fairclough, 1992), negotiated by readers rather than simply taken up, and I also acknowledge that power circulates uneasily between relational positions (rather than being possessively 'invested'). I return to this point later on.

<sup>6</sup> I concur here with analytical work that has examined the contestation, negotiation and mis/appropriation of such hegemonic masculine positions regarding sexuality, sex and risk in interactive conversational discourse (see Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 1996, 1997; Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). I return to the capacitation of resistance within interactive discourse in the next section. Patton (1996) and Wilton (1997) concede that examinations of representations of masculinities in different kinds of safer sex texts directed at non-heterosexual audiences might challenge such 'unmalleable male stereotypes' to some extent.

<sup>7</sup> Several feminist analyses have argued that the regulation of mothering implicated psy-complex judgements about deleterious non-nuclear (or alternative) family arrangements on the sexual socialization children (see Alldred, 1996b; Bozalek, 1997; Burman, 1994; Macleod, 1999; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Several dysfunctional, and sexually abusive, nuclear family formations are made to appear in the *Lovelines* series. Similarly to my previous argument, such diverse domicile scenarios serve to entrench positioning of (a) men as 'scoundrels' who refuse egalitarian change, dialogue about sex or risk-responsibility; (b) girls as highly risk-vulnerable, even with older brothers, fathers and/or mothers' sex partners; and (c) *all* women, irrespective of their domestic circumstances, as pivotal change-agents (of men and boys) and protectors (of girls).

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 7 deployed the same discourse analytical lenses to Chapter 6. That is, loosely following Parker's (1992) Neo-Marxist-Lacanian model of interpellative subject positioning; and supplementing Foucauldian lenses with Fairclough's (1995a) 'inter-textuality' of media discourse, Hall's (1997) polyvocal representational address, and Smith's (1990) 'mediated textual relations'. My

textual corpus of 17 texts – and some ‘other’ *loveLife* brochure-material drawn in – was (read together) larger than Parker’s analysis of isolated texts, and so allowed inter-textuality and inter-discursivity freer reign.

<sup>9</sup> This resonates with numerous critiques – not necessarily directed explicitly at Parker, although he absorbs them – of the power- and ideology-critique of ‘post-structuralism’ conducted (solely) through textual disassembly or archival-statements analysis (see Fairclough, 1992; Howarth, 2000; Macdonell, 1986; Mills, 1997; Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002; Wetherell, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> In Chapter 1, I displayed objections to Hall’s (1980) earlier model of encoding/decoding representations for its assumed ‘instrumentality’ of preferred (ideological) meanings – that is, like a conveyor belt, intentionally encoded by text-producers and docilely decoded by text-consumers (e.g. Stevenson, 1995). Fairclough’s (1995a) and Hall’s (1997) later ‘Foucauldian’ approaches to media discourse have asserted such text-production strategies as ‘non-subjective’; text-producers themselves recognize (with regret) their lack of control of meaning/effects in ‘headless chainlike’ processes that ‘go through the motions’ (Fairclough, 1995a). In line with more contemporaneous readership theory, text-consumption is understood as (notoriously) ‘unruly’ and contingent on context of use.

<sup>11</sup> My analysis in Chapter 8 carefully unpicked the context of manufacture of the ‘academic argumentation’ around the challenge of racism; and I do not claim it as a feature of ‘natural’ conversation. This analysis developed Fairclough’s (1992) notion of inter-textuality – itself borrowed from Bakhtin and Kristeva. Here, voices, texts and power relationships appropriated from prior contexts outside the discussion (as vertical inter-subjectivities), were re-negotiated among discussants (as horizontal inter-subjectivities)(cf. Bevan & Bevan, 1999). This concurs with Wetherell’s (1998) model of paradigmatic and syntagmatic position-negotiation.

<sup>12</sup> Mills (1997) argument implies that resistances are performed differentially in different sites of media-use, with multivalent implications. Thus, for example, there might be several alternative ways to raise a healthy child (and so to resist psy-complex normalization); but failing to boil drinking water in a typhoid epidemic, or failing to use condoms in an HIV/Aids epidemic, produce altogether narrower (bio-medical) cause-and-effect narratives of risk, which (supposedly) limit, or proliferate, resistances.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen’s (1972) *Folk devils and moral panics* defined the elements and forces implicated in ‘moral panic’ as ‘a condition, episode, person or group [that] emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or more often resorted to’ (p. 9).

<sup>14</sup> This excludes other genres of discourse analytical pedagogy: texts that put forward particular/generic guidelines without sustained ‘analytical’ praxes (e.g. Parker, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wood & Kroger, 2000), or those that explicate ‘theories’ of discourse practice (e.g. Howarth, 2000; Jaworski & Coupland, 1999; Macdonell, 1986; Mills, 1997; Schiffrin, 1994; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001b).

<sup>15</sup> This approach probably came closest to Wetherell and Potter’s (1992) masterful, sustained unpicking of racist discourse (Chapter 5); but my focus was on different procedures (of governing mothers, of media discourse), different texts (didactic media texts, discussions), and different tools (explicitly to undo subject positioning). While I held the Foucauldian theoretical lens (on governmentality) constant, Wetherell and Potter read racist discourse with a variety of theoretical lenses.

<sup>16</sup> Wetherell’s (1998) approach is different to this, seemingly seeking to ‘synthesize’ contradictory approaches; the theory-method of each combine to offer modifications. Phillips and Jorgenson (2002) also argue that distinctive elements of different discourse analytical perspectives – with their

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theoretical and methodological foundations intact - may be counterpoised in a multi-faceted, multi-perspectival way (p. 4).

<sup>17</sup> This does not mean that (social psychological) discourse analysts – positioned within discourse-as-interaction and discourse-practice schools (Chapter 5) - do not share common ontological assumptions about language, and its analysis. For example, language is seen as '*active social practice*' in the sense of constituting/constructing versions of the world (e.g. Burr, 1995; Parker, 1998; Potter, 2004a, 2004b). Taylor (2001) further finds most discourse analysts to hold that analytic praxis is (a) *situated*, or bound to specific circumstances of manufacture, (b) *partial*, because 'truths' are constructed through a (supplementable) mapping-process, and (c) *reflexive* of its particularly positioned knowledge-construction (p. 319).

<sup>18</sup> Social psychological schools of discourse analytic praxis - discourse-as-interaction and discourse-practice camps (Chapter 5) – concur that division between theoretical lenses, 'methods' and 'findings' is specious; and both assert the importance of reflexivity as a perspectival tool (Potter, 2003b; Parker, 1994, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Willig (1999c) identifies several 'positionings' in discursive constructions (such as sex as temptation, sex as romance, sex as male preserve) that were predominantly disempowering with regards safer sex. She argues that 'sex education within the context of HIV/Aids must challenge these constructions if it is to be effective' (p. 118). She suggests recommendations that move beyond information-provision, to actively reshape positions made available to individuals (e.g. acknowledge desire preceding sex; uncouple sex & romance and focus on mutual 'needs' instead; challenge constructions of women's sexuality as passive).

<sup>20</sup> With respect to the receptivity of the two media institutions investigated as a broader part of this study – *loveLife* and *Fairlady* – to the corrosive 'truths' of my analyses, my interviews found that: (a) *loveLife* dismissed my analysis on basis that it constituted a reading of isolated texts – not their campaign as a whole; and (b) *Fairlady* accepted only the evaluative content analysis on HIV/Aids coverage during the *Lovelines* series (see Appendix 2), and rejected my theoretical readings of their texts (Chapter 6 & 7), and the non-*Fairlady*-reader sampling of discussion groups (Chapter 8).

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University of Cape Town

# APPENDICES

University of Cape Town

## APPENDIX 1

### LOVELINES TEXTS

*Lovelines textual series in Fairlady, 12 April – 22 November 2000*

### Where to get help

loveLife Fax (011) 327-6863, e-mail: [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za) or visit the website <http://www.lovelife.org.za/>. Contact loveLife for a free copy of the group's booklet *Loud and Clear – Tips on Talking to Your Children about Difficult Things*. NetParent ☎ (011) 719-0461 or visit the website [www.netparent.co.za](http://www.netparent.co.za).

# love lines

## Let's talk about sex

So you think you know everything there is to know about sex? You're as comfortable discussing your bedroom antics over a cappuccino with a friend as planning your child's next birthday party? If so, you're certainly not the norm.

Although there's overwhelming evidence that South Africans of all walks of life are becoming more sexually promiscuous, most of us would rather die than talk about our sex life. Sure, men banter about getting women into bed and women use a discreet code to share their sexual fantasies. But frank, open discussion of sex as a natural, healthy, fun part of life is still not on.

When we look at what's happening in some other countries, it's clear that our reluctance to talk about sex normally has backfired. In Holland and France, where sex education starts as early as five or six years, young people start having sex about four years later than those in, for example, prudish Britain, where sex before marriage is strongly discouraged. Teenage pregnancy rates are also much lower in countries where sex education starts at an early age. And in the United States, where it's still not acceptable to show a condom on commercial television, teenage pregnancy rates are the worst among industrialised nations. (Four in 10 young US women fall pregnant at least once before the age of 20.)

South Africans are catching up fast. Children as young as 10 are experimenting with sex – and some are sexually active even before they start menstruating. South Africa also has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world. According to statistics of the Medical Research Council, one in three teenage girls will be pregnant before the age of 20, while national statistics attribute between 40 and 50 percent of all live births to teenagers.

Among adults, our tight-lipped attitude towards sexual issues has contributed to higher rates of divorce, sexual violence and domestic abuse, and greater prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as chlamydia and gonorrhea, experts believe. South African studies have shown that 30 percent of adults in urban communities have an STD. This makes them five to 20 times more likely to contract HIV should they have sex with an HIV-positive person. Ignorance about HIV/Aids and STDs and resistance to changing sexual behaviour contribute to the spread of Aids.

The only way to change this is to become more open about sex to your friends, partners and children. Odds are your attitude to sex is a hangover from your parents. If they were like most of their peers, they rarely spoke about sex in anything but the most perfunctory way. Yet it's never too soon and never too late to start educating your children about their sexuality and the pleasure of sex with a loving partner.

Sex is a basic human instinct. Take advantage of the fact that we live in an age of advanced contraceptive technology and help your children to make informed choices. The first step is to accept sex as a normal, healthy part of life. And then to talk about it. That, in fact, is the motto of loveLife, an organisation that over the past few years has been researching ways to promote changes in sexual behaviour. In this way loveLife hopes to help curb the HIV/Aids epidemic in South Africa. One thing loveLife has learnt so far, says executive member Judi Nwokedi, is that, contrary to popular belief, openness about sex does not lead to greater promiscuity.

Over the next year, FAIRLADY and loveLife, through this column, will provide you with information and tips to help you talk about sex more easily in your family. The rest will be up to you.

For more information, contact loveLife at Box 45, Parklands 2121 or e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za).

# love lines

## Sexual responsibility

'Close your eyes and think of England' was the Victorian idea of female sexual responsibility. Sex was duty – you had to procreate for the benefit of queen and country. Although sexual morals today are very different, in most parts of the world a woman's sexual responsibility is still equated with child-bearing.

Naomi Wolf says in *Promiscuities*, 'It used to be that girls watched their mothers, and learned how to be women that way.' But most modern mothers are themselves the products of inadequate sexual guidance. In an era of female liberation, women have greater opportunity than ever before, except when it comes to controlling their sexual destiny. In most countries sexuality is still dominated by male chauvinism, and evidence is that SA is among the worst.

How does today's woman teach her daughter to cope with traditional male attitudes to sex when young girls are told that traditional barriers no longer apply? Add to this the often ambiguous relationship between mothers and daughters, and sexual morals may seem confused to a modern young girl. The result is that most teens don't learn about sex from their moms but from an older sibling or friend.

What is this notion of sexual responsibility and how do you make it part of your life? On one level, 'sexual responsibility' implies taking precautions against pregnancy, HIV/Aids and other STDs. But it's not simply about sex, it's an 'absolute' responsibility to yourself – both body and soul.

European studies show that teenagers desperately want advice about relationships. In SA even basic sexual education is lacking in most schools. This puts an even greater onus on parents to create an environment in which children can talk openly about sex.

As parents, friends or mentors we should see it as our responsibility to teach our children about the power of a good relationship and the respect that ought to be tacit in sex. 'Respect' is the key to sexual responsibility; respect for yourself, your body and your sexual partner.

We can't stop teenagers having sex. But we can try to help them make the right decision as to when to have that first experience. Sex education is not about lecturing your child. It's a process of continuous communication. If you don't create an environment in which your children feel comfortable talking about their relationships, you'll never have the chance to help shape and inform their behaviour.

Sexual responsibility starts with you.

**Sweet:** Medicines Control Council chair Dr Helen Rees, who refused to let politics influence her ruling about the viability of HIV drugs. She said although AZT and Nevirapine could be toxic, they were the only available drugs and could offer relief to Aids sufferers.

**Sour:** Parks Mankahlana, spokesperson for President Thabo Mbeki, for his lack of grace in dealing with journalists when trying to defend Mbeki's controversial suggestion that the link between HIV and Aids should be re-examined. His dismissive and abrupt responses smack of old-style political intolerance of criticism.

## 3 'Why do you always flirt?'

Misplaced jealousy that causes unnecessary rows is a result of the jealous partner seeing a situation and imagining a disaster. For example, he's an hour late and she assumes he's having an affair.

Feeling jealous of a partner is rooted in insecurity and can lead to a vicious circle of relationship breakdown: the insecure person gets clingy, their partner balks at the idea of being controlled, and the situation worsens.

**Hidden issue:** Insecurity.

**What to do:** Ask a friend who knows you both whether they think your jealousy's founded. If it isn't, adopt some jealousy rules – don't monitor his phone calls, interrogate him or shout at him as soon as he gets home.

## 4 'I never see you any more'

'Most rows focus on time,' says a relationship therapist. 'A partner who spends a lot of time on his hobbies makes the other partner feel neglected.' They can also feel less successful – they're painfully aware that their partner's out playing tennis or learning French, while they're slumped in front of the TV.

**Hidden issue:** Worrying you're growing apart.

**What to do:** Find activities you enjoy doing together, as well as ones you do separately. Agree to compromise on the time you spend on hobbies.

## 5 'We don't have sex as often as we used to'

In long-term relationships, it's easy to get into a rut of seldom having sex. A relationship psychologist says you can revive your love life as long as there's still an attraction. If one partner simply doesn't feel attracted to the other any more, you have a problem.

There may also be a hidden power struggle going on if one partner is refusing the other sex. 'If someone is feeling insecure, one way to gain control is to withhold sex,' says the psychologist.

**Hidden issues:** Fear of being abandoned, feeling undervalued.

**What to do:** Ban sex for a month, thereby removing the pressure that's built up around it.

## 6 'You never do the washing up'

Quarrels about housework often mask deeper tensions – you may subconsciously fear your partner takes you for granted, for instance. One patient of a relationship counsellor was violent towards her husband because he didn't do the washing up. 'She literally saw it as a sign he didn't love her.'

**Hidden issues:** Feeling unloved and taken for granted.

**What to do:** If he won't budge, stop doing the cleaning and see how long it takes to get a reaction.

## 7 'You always take your mother's side'

According to research, about half of in-law-provoked rows are about parental influence affecting the relationship. Most in-law rows are about who comes first. It's often a battle between you and mother-in-law, as she wants to come first and it's tempting for him to run back to her.

**Hidden issues:** Respect, interference.

**What to do:** Always put your partner before your parents – think of yourself as a unit against the in-laws.



# love lines

## Free to choose

Imagine this: the perfect date, the perfect chardonnay, and now for the big choice – do you go for the crispy duck à l'orange or the butter-nut gnocchi? The wrong choice could spoil the taste of the expensive wine and ruin a wonderful evening. Your insecurity about your meal lies in your inability to choose. To make the right decision you need to know the difference in taste and texture between the two dishes.

This may sound a little pretentious for what is essentially an elaborate chow-down, but when translated into the macrocosm of life, the ability to make the correct choices could mean the difference between being someone who determines her own destiny and being a victim of circumstance. This also applies to your sexual life. The notion of informed or educated choice in the world of sexuality implies 'knowing your rights'; knowing what you want on your personal sexual menu.

We need to make buzz words such as 'freedom of choice' and 'the right to choose' real – part of day-to-day negotiations.

Legally, South African women have more choices than ever before. Just as our country's been liberated from racial oppression, so women in this country are now, supposedly, backed by law and liberated from sexual oppression. This means you're technically free to choose your sexual partner, contraception and even termination of pregnancy. And yet the reality is vastly different. When you consider rape and domestic violence statistics, the term 'freedom of choice' has a hollow ring.

According to an Institute for Security Studies survey conducted last year, 90 percent of women in this country have experienced physical abuse, while 71 percent have experienced sexual abuse. Certainly not something any woman would choose for herself.

So, how can you make informed and educated choices about your sexual destiny? Organisations such as People Opposing Women Abuse (Powa), the Planned Parenthood Association, the Reproductive Rights Alliance, as well as other women's groups opposed to violence against women, provide information and support. But first you have to choose to be a survivor – not a victim – and ask for help.

The courage and conviction of the women who choose to stand up for their rights amidst personal turmoil, and often tragedy, deserve praise and support on every front – from the media to the workplace and, finally, in the home.

Contact Powa at ☎ (011) 642-4345, the Planned Parenthood Association at ☎ (011) 482-4601 or ☎ (021) 448-7312, and the Reproductive Rights Alliance at ☎ (011) 403-2101.

For more information, contact loveLife at Box 45, Parklands 2121, ☎ (011) 327-7379 or e-mail [talk@loveLife.org.za](mailto:talk@loveLife.org.za).

**Sweet:** National Education Minister Kader Asmal for prioritising life skills and sex education in South African schools.

**Sour:** The South African National Aids Council for its lack of a clear vision and leadership, and for failing to communicate to the country's citizens what it's doing, when it's doing it and when we can expect results in the fight against the epidemic.

TALK ABOUT IT



Alta (left) and Ricki in the early days of a friendship that's endured through divorces, weddings, funerals – and HIV.

'This can happen only where there are secure policies that guard against all forms of even the most subtle workplace discrimination and stigmatisation.' As an example, she suggests a scenario in which promotion is blocked or staff are passed over for training on the never-to-be-admitted grounds that they will die sooner than an HIV-negative colleague and consequently offer a less desirable investment for the company. 'Secure policies complement wellness and care programmes,' she says.

One of the most successful wellness management centres has been implemented at Eskom, where HIV-positive workers are helped to manage stress and understand and practise good nutrition. The centre also runs Aids education projects, encouraging HIV-negative staff to be tested and to develop personal strategies to remain negative. It also provides support for the friends and family of those living with the disease.

Eskom is using the support of the South African chapter of the United Nations Gipa (Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/Aids) initiative. One of its strategies is to place publicly acknowledged HIV-positive people within the workplace, says Kgobati Magome, manager of this two-year pilot project. Musa Njoko, the Gipa placement at Eskom in Kwazulu-Natal, believes her presence in the company has resulted in a shift in attitude. 'Fellow employees who're HIV-positive are increasingly finding the strength to disclose,' she says.

The national Department of Health's Beyond Awareness Campaign is completing a booklet and video on public disclosure. Its launch is aimed to coincide with the World Aids Conference in Durban from July 9 to 14.

There's as much to be gained for the people to whom disclosure is made as there is for those who share their initially frightening secret – as Ricki's friend Alta will attest.

Alta says, 'In some strange way, this knowledge has made it easier for my family to talk about HIV and relationships.' As the mother of two daughters – Lizelle, a 21-year-old university student, and Michelle (14) – she finds this invaluable.

'It's forced us to work with HIV at an individual and personal level, to own it as a family,' she says.

And that's really where we'll heal the stigma. ❖

## Who to contact for help

**Aids Helpline** ☎ 08000 1-2322

**Nacosa** ☎ (021) 423-1041

**Aids Write-in Service**, Box 13307, Jacobs 4026

**Beyond Awareness Campaign** – call the Aids Action office ☎ (011) 482-6737 or visit [www.lifanet.co.za](http://www.lifanet.co.za).

**Aids Law Project** ☎ (011) 403-6918

**How often should I have it done?** The jury is still out on this, but the American Society of Clinical Pathologists recommends you undergo an annual examination, while in Britain it's suggested you have it done every three years. 'If the results have been stable and normal and you're in a monogamous relationship, you're probably safe having a Pap smear done every three years,' says Dr Fletcher-Jones.

**What else should I know?** Make sure you get the most accurate Pap-smear result by scheduling your gynae exam at the optimum time – one week before your period is due. Don't use vaginal medications, creams or spermicides and don't douche for 72 hours before the examination. Also, don't have intercourse 24 hours before visiting your doctor.

## Breast examination

'Breast cancer affects one in every 10 women – making it the commonest female cancer in this country,' says Dr Fletcher-Jones. 'With this in mind, it's vital for women to undergo regular breast checks. Few women know how to examine themselves properly. Ideally, you should check your breasts each month after your period, and have them palpated by your doctor or gynaecologist once every one to three years. From the age of 35 to 40 onwards, depending on their family history, women should also have regular mammograms.'

**What does a mammogram involve?** Mammography is a safe x-ray technique that creates images of the inside of your breasts. Each breast will be positioned between two plates, which are then compressed. There's still some debate about whether the slight amounts of radiation used during a mammogram may be harmful, or in fact trigger a malignancy, but gynaecologists say the risk of exposure to radiation is negligible compared with the benefits gained from early detection.

**Does it hurt?** A mammogram may be uncomfortable, as there's a fair amount of pressure on your breasts. But take heart; it takes only minutes to perform.

**How often should I have it done?** Have a baseline mammogram at about 35 or 40, as this will serve as a good reference point for later mammograms. From the age of 40 onwards have one every one to two years. If you have a family history of breast cancer, you need to be especially vigilant about having comprehensive breast examinations.

**What else should I know?** For the best results, don't go for a mammogram just before your period, as your breasts may be painful and swollen. Rather schedule an appointment for the week after menstruation.

## Bone-density scan

Osteoporosis is a preventable disease in which bones progressively lose calcium and other minerals, rendering them weak and brittle. It's often referred to as the 'silent killer', since you're unlikely to know you have osteoporosis until you suffer a spine or hip fracture. One in every three Westernised postmenopausal women will suffer a spinal fracture due to osteoporosis, and up to 20 percent of hip-fracture sufferers die within a year. But don't wait until you're menopausal before you pay attention to your bone health; from the age of 35 the density and strength of your bones begins to decrease.▶

FAIRLADY, 24 MAY, 2000

# love lines

## From the horse's mouth

The word *S'camtu* is *tsotsitaal*. It comes straight off the street and means 'talk about it'.

It's the name of a new multilingual TV programme, initiated by loveLife in an attempt to get teenagers to talk about sex openly among themselves and with their parents. If you consider that half of our population is under 15, that on average youngsters start experimenting with sex at 14, and that the HIV rate is increasing fastest among 15- to 20-year-olds, now is not a minute too soon to start talking about sex. So parents, on Thursday nights get comfortable on the couch with your kids for the next episode of *S'camtu*.

As loveLife's Judi Nokwedi explains, *S'camtu* aims to inform young South Africans about their sexual rights, behaviour and choices.

'Sex is normal and fun. Let's do it but let's keep it healthy,' says Nokwedi. 'It's the way this information's imparted that makes *S'camtu* young, fresh and an extremely exciting approach to talking about sexual activity,' she says. Fifteen youngsters present the programme. They were trained in the use of video cameras and then sent back to their home environs, where they sought out their friends and contemporaries and spoke about... sex. The 13 programmes deal with various sexual issues, including the differences between men and women, having sex for the first time, virginity, HIV/Aids and puberty. Each episode has 'information billboards' with useful facts and advice for viewers.

Just as the TV series *Yizo Yizo*, which focused on gangsterism and drug abuse in schools, was considered highly controversial by both the media and audiences, so *S'camtu* is sure to pick up flak. Sadly, some of it will come from parents who think the programme's too explicit. Yet parents need to realise their children are being bombarded constantly with information about sex – some of it false, some true – via the media. The importance of a show like this can't be underestimated. According to loveLife research, most children say they want to learn about sex from their parents, which is why parents can play an important role by watching *S'camtu* with their children. The onus is on parents to participate, initially by watching the programme, but also by encouraging their children to communicate their own expectations, fears and questions. The next step would be for parents to clarify further the issues identified in the programme.

One of the *S'camtu* presenters, 14-year-old Hlayisanani Salani, says it was only after his involvement in the programme that he felt empowered to make the correct choices. Isn't this what all parents want?

*S'camtu* is screened on e.tv at 6 pm on Thursdays.

Contact loveLife at Box 45, Parklands 2121, ☎ (011) 327-7379 or e-mail [talk@loveLife.org.za](mailto:talk@loveLife.org.za). Also visit [www.loveLife.org.za](http://www.loveLife.org.za).

**Sweet:** To Professor Tony Coovadia, chair of the Durban Aids 2000 international conference to be held later this year, for remaining level-headed amid severe criticism from the rest of the world regarding the SA government's controversial stance that the link between HIV and Aids should be re-examined.

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effects, and treatment is usually long-term. The trick is to make sure you get a good diagnosis.

**T**he patient can do a lot of the legwork, sometimes making fairly obvious connections. For example, if your throat swells after a crayfish meal, the allergen shouldn't be too difficult to identify. Usually the doctor also needs to put in some detective work to identify (or raise a suspicion of the identity of) the allergen(s) causing the symptoms.

Blood tests can confirm the suspicion before the allergens causing the symptoms have been identified. Once the most likely cause has been identified, clinical tests are done, using skin-prick tests or blood tests or both, to confirm the suspicion.

In skin-prick tests, a little of the allergen is pricked into the top layer of skin on the inner forearm. If the patient is allergic to that substance, a small weal and flare reaction (itchy, red, raised lump) will develop at the site of the prick after 10 – 15 minutes.

Skin tests are usually performed for a limited range of common inhalant allergens, such as grass and tree pollens, mites and animal danders. They're not done for potentially dangerous or potent allergens such as drugs or bee venom.

It's possible to identify the cause of allergy in more than 95 percent of cases, says South Africa's only allergologist, UCT's Prof Paul Potter. Blood tests for more than 400 allergens are available,

## Identify the cause in more than 95 percent of cases

but in practice most tests involve just a handful of the most common allergens. The cost of both the skin-prick and blood tests are fully reimbursed by most medical aids.

You don't have to put up with allergies. Next time you have uncomfortable symptoms that may be associated with allergy, start keeping track of when and where they occur, then see your doctor. Otherwise you could end up as one of the costly undiagnosed sufferers of a preventable condition.

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### Useful contacts

The Allergy Society of South Africa provides free information sheets on the most common allergies. Write to Allsa, Box 88, Observatory 7935 requesting information, and enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope, ☎ (021) 447-9019 or visit its very useful website [www.allergy.net](http://www.allergy.net).

The National Asthma Education Programme, 11 Park Lane, Parkview 2122.

Coeliac Support Group, Suite 2003, Juniper House, 92 Overport Drive, Overport, Durban 4000, ☎ (031) 83-3109.

Medic-Alert Foundation, Scotts Building, 10 Plein Street, Cape Town 8001, ☎ (021) 461-7328.

# love lines

## In love again...

Aids has taken the thrill out of new relationships. A new sexual partner can spell danger, even death, so how do you protect yourself? Broaching the subject of safe sex can be daunting, but if your new partner won't protect himself, you'll have to take the initiative.

Karen (31), who recently left a 10-year relationship and is about to enter a new one, has a completely frank attitude. 'I won't consent to sex without a condom until he can show me a certificate stating his HIV-negative status,' she says, 'and he has every right to demand the same from me.'

Unfortunately, her attitude's still the exception. Studies show most women don't believe they're really at risk of HIV infection from 'decent young men'. They agree to unprotected sex, closing their eyes and shooting up a quick prayer. But with HIV infection increasing by 25 – 35 percent each year, everybody's at risk. As a woman, it's your right to demand protection from your new lover and, if he refuses, to consider if he's really committed to a mutually respectful relationship. If a man's careless about protection, it's up to you to keep condoms – or female condoms – by your bedside or in your purse.

Demand for female condoms in South Africa is low, which means most women still leave it to the man to provide protection. Female condoms, sold as Care, Femidon and Reality, contain an efficient silicone lubricant and look rather like an extra-large male condom. They may not be the most natural, comfortable option, but they do give a woman the opportunity to take charge of contraception and protect her own health without having to ask permission from her male partner. They can be inserted long before intercourse and are reusable, which cuts down on costs (from R8 a 2-pack, from chemists).

Microbicides – any chemical barrier inserted vaginally to prevent viruses entering a woman's body – are being investigated. The American Foundation on Aids Research (amfAR) says the ideal microbicide is a gel, cream, suppository or film, applied or inserted before sex, which lasts for several hours. It shouldn't affect sperm, so the woman can become pregnant if she wishes.

One problem is that some gels and foams are detergent-based, which can cause or exacerbate genital ulcers and cuts, and make it easier for the HIV virus to enter the woman's body. The challenge is to develop natural 'biotherapeutics' that block HIV and other STDs without destroying sensitive mucosal tissues and aggravating the ulcerations that promote HIV transmission.

Pharmaceutical giants are reluctant to invest in microbicide research, because products will go mainly to developing countries, where they won't make a profit on sales.

About 50 vaginal microbicides are currently being researched by the Alliance for Microbicide Development (AMD), a consortium of scientists, companies and attorneys, but only three have been released for mass trials. South Africa's one of four countries involved in testing microbicide products to protect women and gay men from HIV/Aids. The clinical trial, led by Dr Helen Rees of the Reproductive Health Research Unit at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital under the auspices of the World Health Organisation, has already built up a reputation for being a leading study in the field.

Watch this space for details when microbicides become available locally.

For more information check out the website [www.scamto.lovelife.org.za](http://www.scamto.lovelife.org.za), email [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za), ☎ (011) 372-7379 or write to loveLines, Box 45, Parklands 2121.

TALK ABOUT IT

# love lines

## In love again . . .

Most of us know that, when it comes to communication, men are from Mars and women are from Venus, but what we don't know is the impact this has on our sex life and sexual health.

While women like to pour out their emotions in drawn-out, in-depth discussions, the average man will do anything to avoid talking about his feelings, especially when it comes to his sexual fears and fantasies. In a recent survey by the Reproductive Health Research Unit (RHRU), most of the South African men interviewed said they could easily discuss their sexual relationship with their partners. However, when probed further, half of them admitted they were very uncomfortable discussing contraception and sexually transmitted diseases with their partners and had refrained from doing so.

Let's face it, our men are not likely to change in the near future. The reality is if women want to improve the quality of their sexual relationships, it's up to them to create a climate in which their partners feel more comfortable talking to them about sex.

What better way to do this than to learn to vocalise your own needs, not only because you have the right to pleasure in the bedroom, but also because your health can be endangered if you're forced to have sex which pleases only the man.

The practice of 'dry sex', which according to the RHRU survey is very popular with many SA men, is one example of a sexual practice which can be harmful to the woman. During 'dry sex' the vaginal fluid is 'mopped up' or stopped by using various substances, such as towels, tissue paper, Dettol, Jik, Vicks, snuff, crushed leaves, Tiger Balm and Deep Heat. According to the men surveyed, the friction created in this way increased sexual enjoyment.

Apart from the fact that 'dry sex' could be painful for the woman, it also puts her at greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and cervical cancer. Apart from an increased risk of tears and perforation, the lack of vaginal fluid – which contains anti-microbial agents – could increase the woman's chances of contracting STDs.

Talking about sex is the only way for women to ensure they get what they want in bed and to ensure their sexual safety. Psychologists advise sexual partners not to have any taboos or secrets when it comes to sex, because it prevents the relationship from growing. This means you shouldn't avoid the unpleasant issues, such as STDs.

If a couple is in constant communication about everything, then telling each other about your sexual needs will be easy. By being honest about your needs, wants and desires, you'll not only improve your sex life, but you'll also lay the foundations for an honest, open relationship.

For more information check out the website [www.scanto.lovelife.org.za](http://www.scanto.lovelife.org.za)  
e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za)  
☎ (011) 372-7379  
or write to loveLines, Box 45,  
Parklands 2121.

TALK ABOUT IT

of remarriage is highest in the first two years. Remarriage partners find their bond immediately under assault from the children. Family experts agree this is yet another reason for couples heading into remarriage to prolong the period of courtship in spite of the incentives to merge households.

Even non-custody can pose problems. A parent who has visitation rights only is experiencing some degree of loss, while the children are in a state of post-divorce mourning over the loss of an intact family and full-time connection to a parent. No matter which parent a child is with, someone is missing all the time. This leads to upset, depression and resentment aimed at the new marriage.

'Disciplining often becomes a problem,' says Noelene. 'For example, if the mother expects to do the disciplining in a certain way and the step-father does it differently, she may end up saying "they aren't your children".' Discipline must be discussed before the marriage. Be honest with the children, acknowledging openly that it isn't going to be easy, especially with adolescents.

The fact is, the step-parent harbours a deep wish that the children didn't exist, the very same kids the birth parent couldn't live without, so people need to develop an empathetic understanding of the different emotional worlds parent and step-parent occupy. Step-parents should avoid trying to replace the missing parent, says Noelene. To be a step-parent is never to be fully at home in your own house when it comes to the children. The non-biological parent's role is crucial, but fuzzy. Most importantly, the more a couple can agree on expected roles, the more satisfied they'll be.

With all these difficulties, remarriage begins to look like the dark underbelly of marriage, but we have a lot to learn from it, experts say. Remarriage holds the secrets to all marriage. And having stepchildren illuminates the divergent needs and loyalties that are always there but often invisible in original families.

With so much vulnerability, and the wellbeing of so many people at stake, prospective partners in a remarriage need a little help. The impression of family and friends on whether this remarriage will work is important, Pat says. 'You've got to do it by consensus. You've got to listen to friends. You're in an altered state by way of infatuation. The failure factor is there, making you fragile.'

The opinion of family and friends is also to some degree predictive of remarriage success. 'Friends and family know a lot. They know who you are. They knew you in your previous marriage, and they can see how you are in the context of the new relationship.'

The trick is to listen to them. Then work with absolute honesty and commitment on ensuring that what you bring to the remarriage is your best. Take responsibility for your happiness, says Noelene, and your remarriage has a good chance of working out. ♦

• **Grow Up! How Taking Responsibility Can Make You a Happy Adult** by Frank Pittman (Golden Books, 1998) is available on order from bookshops for about R92.

### Prepare yourself

Famsa offers divorce counselling as well as 'Prepare' programmes for first and subsequent marriages. The course costs R120 a session, on a sliding scale (no one is turned away) and usually lasts three sessions. Consult your telephone directory for the Famsa branch nearest you.

## Rapid recovery

**Fast immunity** Sambucus – a winter cold-buster made from black elderberry; echinacea – an immune-booster made from coneflowers

**Fast relaxation** Valeriana Day Time – a herbal remedy to relieve irritability and stress; Calmettes; Kava Kava

**Fast sleep** Valeriana Night Time – to relieve tension and promote natural sleep; Nytol; Betasleep; Sleep Eeze; Passiflora; Insomnia Remedy

**Fast smile** Prozac – prescription antidepressant; St John's wort – herbal antidepressant

**Fast sex** Viagra – prescription-only drug for impotent men

**Fast slim** Xenical – prescription weight-loss drug for the clinically obese; CLA Body Toner, Helix Slim and Lipolene – natural weight-loss remedies

**Fast willpower** Buspar – prescription antidepressant also used to treat nicotine and cocaine addiction

**Fast energy** B-complex vitamin pills; ginseng

**Fast sobriety** Essentiale, Prohep, Cruciale and ResQ – to prevent and ease the effects of the night before

chemical support such as nicotine patches isn't a bad thing – particularly in the tough, early stages. TV adverts urging viewers to give up are gentle and advocate cutting down first and then using nicotine substitutes to help. Even placebos, such as pretend cigarettes, can help kick-start your willpower.

Liezel says when people stop smoking they should take a good vitamin, mineral and trace element supplement to balance out deficiencies and help their body cope better with withdrawal symptoms. The best way to boost willpower and prevent cravings for sweet or starchy foods is to stick to a simple diet that contains all the basic food groups and to stay away from junk food.

For others, quick fixes are not about kick-starting willpower but an honest admission that they can't entirely change their lifestyle. Lucy (31) has suffered from migraines since she was 16. She's isolated trigger factors, including stress, red wine and lack of sleep, but always has an emergency supply of Imigran – which stops attacks quickly – in her handbag.

'I try to cut out the triggers, but if I'm going to have a life, it's impossible to avoid attacks completely. So it's good to know that if I get a migraine I can take a pill that'll get rid of it fast.'

The pill world's clearly here to stay, though maybe it's time we confronted some of the issues underlying our modern angst about health. As Marie says, 'Rather than looking for quick fixes, people would be better off thinking, "How can I simplify my life?" Otherwise there's no time to change bad habits or really feel in control.'

Perhaps the best way to view these instant pills is as a way of relieving symptoms while you get to the root of the problem. Or in the case of lifestyle tablets, they could kick-start better health habits by giving you a boost and letting you see results quickly – which will, in turn, motivate you to modify your lifestyle.

Maybe it's a case of swallowing a big dose of willpower ... ❖

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## love lines

### Straight talk

Does your teenage daughter know when you had sex for the first time and with whom? Does she know whether you liked it?

If the thought of discussing such intimate details with your child makes you cringe, consider that before she can turn to you for advice on sexual matters, she needs to know that you've had to make the same difficult choices and that you can relate to her.

Every mother dreads the day when she must start talking to her teenagers about sex. But experts say if you wait until they're teenagers, you've waited way too long. It should be an 18-year conversation about love, relationships, values and sex that begins as soon as your child starts to communicate. Establishing open communication early also ensures that your children will turn to you if someone's been abusing them.

Before you begin to discuss sexual issues, be clear about your own values, but avoid coming across as pedantic and authoritarian.

As a parent you must make an effort to understand and be willing to talk about the issues your daughter's grappling with, many of which may make you feel uncomfortable. These could include questions like: How do I know if I'm in love? Will sex bring me closer to my boyfriend? How do I know when I'm ready to have sex? Will having sex make me popular or will boys think I'm a slut? How do I tell my boyfriend I don't want to have sex without losing him? How does contraception work?

Research shows that talking to your children about sex doesn't encourage them to become sexually active. It also shows that teens who are close to their parents and can talk freely to them are less likely to have sex at an inappropriately early age or to fall pregnant if they do have sex.

Try to persuade your daughter to make responsible sexual choices, but don't be too prescriptive. This could include telling her you think children in high school are too young to handle the emotional consequences of sex, especially given today's risks. If she does decide to have sex, she should use protection in the form of a condom. Explain that it's not unusual for a teenager to find herself in a sexually charged situation and that she needs to think in advance about how she'll handle it. Will she say 'no' or will she negotiate to use a condom? Also tell her she doesn't have to have sex to keep her boyfriend.

You could also explain that one of the reasons you're concerned about teens drinking and taking drugs is that this often leads to unprotected sex, which may result in pregnancy or infection with STDs.

If you're still not convinced that talking to your children about sex is a good idea, consider that while the overall fertility rate's decreasing, more teenagers are falling pregnant. Also keep in mind that interviews with teenage boys show many of them think it's fine to force sex on a girl who's drunk or stoned. And one of the most common myths among teens is that pregnancy can't happen the first time they have sex.

You can dispel these myths and help your teenager make responsible decisions. The trick is to be easy to approach and interesting to talk to.

For more information check out the website [www.scamto.lovelife.org.za](http://www.scamto.lovelife.org.za) or [www.lovelife.org.za](http://www.lovelife.org.za), or contact Lovelife, Box 45, Parklands 2121, ☎ (011) 327-7379, fax (011) 327-6863 or e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za).

TALK ABOUT IT

FAIRLADY 5 JULY 2000

# love lines

## Safe sex and symptoms

The awful realisation has struck – you've overheard the phone call, found an incriminating letter or listened to a confession: your husband has been having an affair. It's usually a devastating realisation. But today, besides the feelings of hurt, there's often another, more immediate fear – could he have caught HIV? And if so, could you be infected?

Or maybe you've had an affair and are now worrying because you didn't practise safe sex.

Suddenly Aids is no longer something that happens to other people very different from yourself. South Africa has the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in the world, with about 3,5 million infected people. Of women attending antenatal clinics, almost 23 percent are HIV-positive. And according to a World Health Organisation expert, that is likely to be an underestimate of the population as a whole, since HIV-positive women tend to be less fertile and therefore less likely to be at antenatal clinics.

Maybe you think, 'It's impossible, I'm a nice (decent or respectable) woman.' But financial or social standing – and morals – won't necessarily protect you against HIV.

Having sex with someone also means having intimate contact with all their previous partners – and with their partners' previous partners, and so on. Your husband – or you – may have slipped from the straight and narrow only once, but what do you know about the sexual history of the other woman or man?

Another risk factor to look out for is the presence of a sexually transmitted disease (STD). If you or your partner have an STD, the chances of contracting HIV are far higher.

According to a health survey from 1998, 12 percent of men aged 15 and older reported having STD symptoms, with the highest prevalence in the 15 – 44 age group. No one knows how many of these people are married or in serious relationships. Nor are STDs confined to lower socioeconomic classes. In 1999 private doctors, whose clients are more likely to be in higher-income brackets, treated even more cases than the public sector.

If you're worried, what can you do? You're unlikely to want to discuss with your husband or boyfriend whether or not he's practised safe sex – and maybe you don't trust him to tell you the truth anyway.

Talk to someone you trust, then decide whether you want an HIV test. This is particularly important if you're pregnant or breastfeeding, because of the risk of transmitting the disease to your child.

If you do have a test, remember there's a latency period when tests may not pick up the virus, so consider having a second one a few months later to finally put your mind at rest.

Avoid having sex with others until you're sure you're in the clear.

And if you decide to stick with your man, consider practising safe sex with him, using condoms and spermicide. After all, no matter how much you love him, you should love your own life more.

For more info, check out the website [www.scamto.lovelife.org.za](http://www.scamto.lovelife.org.za), e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za), ☎ (011) 372-7379, fax (011) 327-6863 or write to LoveLines, Box 45, Parklands 2121.

talk about it

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Photographs and memories:  
Zaida and Ricki in their youth.

everything and spent a lot of time together dancing, going to tea-rooms, dressing up in fashionable clothes, all those usual things?

Zaida's parents live with her and her husband, and she gave the FAIRLADY article to her father to read. 'My father thought of Ricki as his own daughter, and when I gave him the article I said there was something sad about it. He read it and then cried. The next Sunday Ricki came to lunch and the two of them spent a long time talking. She also met my children.'

'It was wonderful,' recalls Ricki. 'I felt the same love as I did all those years ago when I was accepted into Zaida's home and family.'

Living with a life-threatening illness, be it HIV, cancer or heart disease, changes the nature of personal relationships as well as the accepted notions of life and death. 'It's important to think about death,' says Ricki. 'When you're HIV-positive or if you have another disease, death sits on your shoulder every day. All of us have to die, but this just makes it all that much clearer, more real.'

Thinking about death isn't always morbid. Realising that life is a temporary passage, she says, adds magic and more meaning to each waking moment. 'There's something that comes out of human beings when we realise we're dealing with the death or the illness of another. HIV can bring out the best in people, things they never knew they had, such as compassion – and not just for the person with HIV but for others. You literally watch them grow spiritually.'

Speaking openly about HIV is still difficult for people who don't have the virus, she says. 'Some are terrified that they'll say the wrong thing. Most people want to know how I got it, but I've stopped talking about that. It doesn't matter. People want to know because it makes them feel more comfortable. The best thing you can do is listen and not judge.'

Zaida and Gillian are thrilled to have found their special friend again, and they're all determined to make the most of it, promising to see each other often and to be there when any of them needs company or support. Watching the three women, there's a sense of comfort and ease that comes with years of knowing, an acceptance that comes with a friendship forged in youth that has been joyfully rekindled.

'Now that we've found her again we'll never let her go,' says Zaida, sweeping Ricki up in a hug.

Gillian adds, 'That's for sure.'

FAIRLADY 19 JULY 2000

# love lines

## Making a choice

No woman would ever choose to face the difficult choice of whether or not to terminate an unplanned pregnancy. Choosing to continue an unwanted pregnancy means a profound adjustment that can result in ongoing problems for both mother and child, while termination may carry an emotional burden of fear, guilt and regret, although research has shown there is also often a powerful feeling of relief. In the past, termination was accompanied by the possibility of infections, lifelong sterility or even death, as many women resorted to their only option for termination – a backstreet abortion.

Since 1997, this has no longer been the case, as the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act confirmed a woman's right to choose a termination. A termination before 12 weeks of pregnancy may be performed either by a doctor or by a specially trained midwife. Any woman, even a minor, can request this on demand, although health workers are instructed to encourage underage women to tell their parents.

A late termination, between 13 and 20 weeks of pregnancy, may be performed under certain conditions. These include rape, incest and physical or mental threat to the woman. Most importantly, though, is that if the pregnancy will affect the woman socioeconomically, she can have it terminated. After 20 weeks of pregnancy, strict rules apply for termination: if the pregnancy poses a physical or mental risk to the woman or if there is a substantial risk that the fetus would suffer from mental or physical injury. Only a doctor may perform terminations from 13 weeks onwards.

By July 1999, an estimated 92 000 legal terminations had been performed since the Act came into effect.

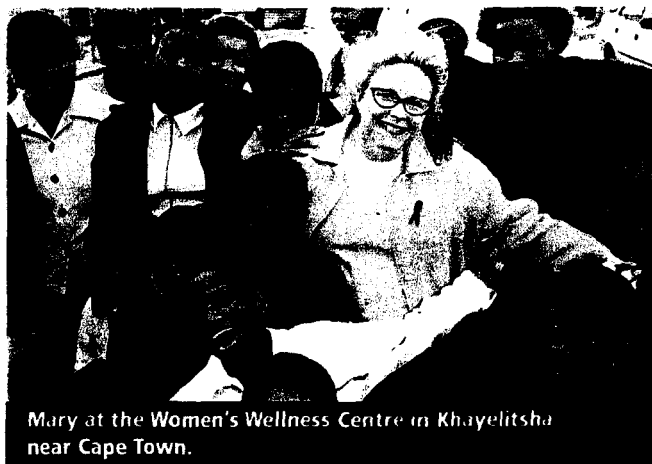
This legislation was controversial from the start, with religious groups protesting vociferously on the grounds that it violates the baby's fundamental right to life. Pro-choice advocates argue that the mother's rights outweigh those of the fetus in early pregnancy.

According to the 1999 Annual Health Review of the Health Systems Trust, many of the women trying to exercise their right to a safe termination are faced with disapproval, ostracism and even violence from health-care workers who refuse to perform the procedure on ethical grounds. Some doctors and midwives ignore the provision in the Act that requires a medical practitioner to refer the patient to a service that will perform a termination for her. This can result in women once again being exposed to the risk of an abortion performed by an unqualified person.

Counselling on all the options available to a woman with an unplanned pregnancy should be empathetic and informative and not, as is often the case, in a hurried and judgmental atmosphere. At present there is much that needs to be done before women can be seen as having access to a safe termination of pregnancy service in this country.

For more info, check out the website [www.scamto.lovelife.org.za](http://www.scamto.lovelife.org.za), e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za), ☎ (011) 327-7379, fax (011) 327-6863 or write to LoveLines, Box 45, Parklands 2121.

**talk about it**



Mary at the Women's Wellness Centre in Khayelitsha near Cape Town.

which 'we have not firmly placed into our understanding and response to HIV/Aids,' says Mary Crewe, director at the Centre for the Study of Aids at the University of Pretoria.

Brian's death in 1993 left a gaping wound for Mary and the boys that only time, patience and love will heal. Mary encourages Max and Zach to talk about their father and his death, because in confronting death, they also affirm life. And she's the first to admit she still has a lot of living to do. But she adds, 'It's quality of life I hope to share with the boys rather than mere quantity.'

Throughout her life with HIV Mary has, several times, taken anti-retroviral treatments, but these have, ironically, resulted in long periods of ill health and extreme nausea that have kept her a virtual prisoner in her New York home. She knows anti-retroviral treatments have dramatically benefited many of her closest friends. But these drugs have, while increasing her CD4 count (a measure of the strength of the immune system), not supported her holistic approach towards her own health management. For the sake of her young children and in response to pressure from them, she will, however, begin therapy again.

'But I'm in a position to make that personal choice,' she emphasises after visiting an HIV-positive women's support group in Khayelitsha, where such choice is a faraway dream. It's this message she conveyed on her recent trip to South Africa, the epicentre of the world epidemic. 'People living with HIV – especially women – irrespective of their circumstances, need to be empowered to make some level of choice about their lives and their health.' It is choice that gives power over this epidemic.

Max and Zachary are exceptionally proud of their mother, and Mary believes the reason they haven't faced any discrimination is because of their openness and communication – between themselves and with others.

It's a lesson we as a nation still need to master. 'Running against the grain takes courage and determination,' says Mary, 'but it's also perfect training for true champions and victors.'

She believes it's the fear of discrimination that keeps people living with HIV silent. 'This vicious cycle needs to be broken. It's a stalemate that needs to be addressed by people who, by virtue of their position in society, have the influence to do something.'

Ashraf Grimwood couldn't agree more. 'It's imperative our leading public figures who are HIV-positive come forward. They have a responsibility to do so – for themselves and our country,' he says.

'They could learn from Mary's brave example.'





commonly stomach complaints ranging from heartburn to bleeding ulcers – can be difficult to bear.

Celebrex, the most recent 'miracle' breakthrough for arthritis sufferers, has been available in South Africa since February. Reportedly having far fewer side effects than any drug previously used to combat arthritis (although some users have reported nausea), Celebrex outsold Viagra in the USA within its first year.

Ten years ago, however, Debbie could rely only on what was available then. 'I had to wait two weeks before I saw a specialist and received the correct medication. I stayed on this for the next six years. I carried on teaching for another year, but the pain and stress proved too much for me.

'But I was lucky; my husband was incredibly understanding. When I found myself plunged into deep depression, he was the strong one. From day one he wanted to make life easier for me by modifying the house. This upset me even more. I didn't want my life to change.'

Debbie now accepts changes more easily and says this illness has impacted on all areas of her life. 'Something as simple as carrying shopping from the car becomes a strain on my hand joints. I can't play the kinds of sport I did before, but I can swim in summer and I walk – an essential form of exercise for arthritis.'

Being diagnosed with arthritis isn't the end of the road, says Debbie. 'You can live well with this illness. The golden rules are to listen to your doctors, have regular blood tests and take your medication.'

Medical experts agree there's nothing wrong with alternative remedies, as long as the conventional treatment isn't dropped. 'It's amazing what people will believe,' says Debbie. 'They'll read about a new cure in a tabloid and immediately drop their treatment. They may even feel considerably better, but they don't realise that the damage is still taking place internally.'

'Modern treatments are pretty aggressive, and you can really see the difference between a young and an elderly arthritic. A young person receiving proper treatment is difficult to spot.'

Debbie is national coordinator for an arthritis patient-partner programme. Everyone in the programme has arthritis. 'We focus on providing various communities with education on arthritis – what it is and how to treat it. There are many old wives' tales and misconceptions out there, but we're working on them.'

Moira Vallet, coordinator of the Johannesburg branch of the Arthritis Foundation, agrees. 'One of our biggest problems is simply awareness,' she says. 'Young women like Debbie don't fit the stereotypical arthritic in people's minds.'

But is a cure in sight? 'I live in hope,' says Debbie. 'All the research on Aids means money going into autoimmune disease research, which is exactly what arthritis is.'

Debbie's last words are affirming: 'Life doesn't end when you

## Useful contacts

Arthritis Foundation, Johannesburg (011) 717-2131/2346;  
Cape Town (021) 425-3847/2344  
Patient-partner programme (011) 476-7034  
Or visit the website [www.arthritis.co.za](http://www.arthritis.co.za)

# love lines

## When puberty comes early

Most parents blanch when their children first ask about sex. What is expected from children at each age changes with every generation, and it can be a race for parents to catch up, let alone stay ahead of what they need to know. There's substantial evidence internationally to support the fact that talking to your children from an early age about sex and sexual behaviour is a fundamental influence in delayed sexual activity, and more responsible sexual behaviour, among teenagers.

These changes are not merely a result of emotional and social pressures. Studies show that today's children mature faster emotionally and physically. A 1997 study of 17 000 American children by Dr Marcia Herman-Giddens concluded that the age of puberty has dropped dramatically, with some girls as young as eight or nine experiencing their first menstrual period. The reason for this has been hotly debated, and the most likely contenders are hormone-enriched food and better nutrition leading to a higher percentage of body fat (and therefore higher oestrogen levels at a younger age). Both factors may play a part. The South African situation has not been documented, but anecdotal evidence among parents suggests that both the physical and behavioural signs of puberty are appearing at increasingly younger ages.

What's to be done? Emotionally, an eight-year-old is far less able to deal with newly aroused sexual feelings and bodily changes than a 13-year-old. Taboos about discussing sex with children are reinforced when parents are faced with questions from a child rather than a teenager. A combination of information and communication may help parents and children make better sense of unexpected signs of adulthood when toddlerhood seems but recently left behind.

It's never too early to start talking to your child about difficult issues like sex, drug abuse and violence. Open communication gives you the chance to guide your child through the difficult teenage years. Avoid messages that imply sexual development, sex and sexuality are somehow shameful. But your children also need to be aware of the risks. Some children may need to receive formal or informal training on being assertive, since early sexual development makes them more likely to fall prey to sexual abuse from older teens and adults.

It's worth remembering that puberty, at whatever age, doesn't mean that sexual activity is necessarily imminent. As ever, children need to be told about the emotional implications of sexual interaction as much as about the physical mechanics. With this in mind, loveLife recently launched a publication, *Talking and Listening: Parents and Teenagers Together*, which includes material to help teenagers, their parents and other caregivers to talk and work through difficult issues. Topics include the danger of HIV infection, unwanted pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, violence and abuse, and so on (for free copies, write to the address below).

For more information check out the website [www.lovelife.org.za](http://www.lovelife.org.za)  
e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za), ☎ (011) 327-7379  
fax (011) 327-6863 or write to  
loveLines, Box 45, Parklands 2121

**talk about it**



# love lines

## Who tells the truth about sexuality?

So, do you fit the stereotype of the modern woman – young, slim, sexy and mostly blonde? Even as we celebrate racial diversity and gender equality, the media continue to project this ideal. A comprehensive media analysis, published by the Women's Media Watch South Africa, confirms this depressing reality.

'We found that women were shown predominantly in passive roles to be looked at, and their contribution to society was downplayed,' explains Lene Overland, co-editor of the Women's Media Watch newsletter *Making Waves*.

The media are a powerful influence in shaping attitudes and values in society. If women are stereotypically portrayed in the media as subordinate sex objects, the consequences are profound. It's not only women who see the narrow and limited portrayals of their lives in almost everything from soap operas to hard news coverage. Naturally, editors and programme directors who influence content have political and social agendas of their own that can influence everything they publish or broadcast. Regulatory bodies like the Broadcast Complaints Commission and the Advertising Standards Authority also still largely reflect a traditional perspective on issues such as sexuality.

Looking for accurate information about sexual issues can be like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack – finding realistic role models is even harder. For young people who are coming to grips with their own sexuality, the images they see are often overblown, and the information they glean incomplete. Of course, teenagers are media-literate and know the difference between *Melrose Place* and real life. But there's a shortage of local actuality programmes and dramas dealing with the reality of sexuality in South Africa. *S'Camto*, the teen sexuality documentary series on e.tv, was part of a loveLife initiative to fill this information gap. Last year's highly acclaimed drama series *Yizo Yizo* was also inspired by this shortage of information on sexuality. Printed information sources can be equally uneven. On top of this, sex and sexuality are often sensationalised – weird sex sells.

Thought-provoking material on sexual health can help to create a new openness about sexuality in our society. The international evidence is clear: open discussion of sex and sexuality and early sex education result in the delayed onset of sexual activity and sharp reductions in teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. The values you pass on to your children concerning sexuality and gender must be informed by accurate information and unbiased perspectives.

Write to loveLife at Box 45, Parklands 2121 or e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za) to receive a copy of *Talking to Your Teenager*. For more information about sexuality check out the website [www.lovelife.org.za](http://www.lovelife.org.za).

☎ (011) 327-7379, fax (011) 327-6863 or write to loveLines, Box 45, Parklands 2121

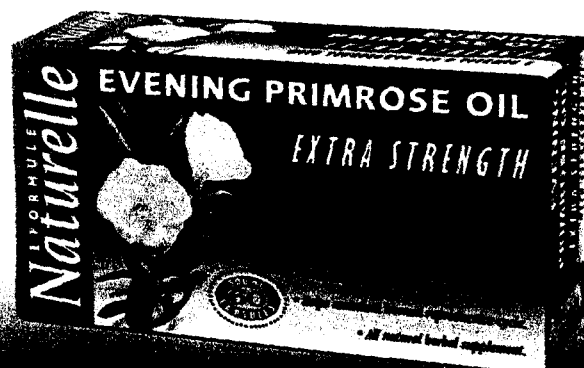
**talk about it**

FAIRLADY 13 SEPTEMBER 2000



## Everything but the kitchen sink.

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## Self-love

Masturbation has historically been perceived as sinful, smutty and puerile. But the truth is that most adults make masturbation a regular part of their sexual satisfaction. Surveys show that adults who masturbate regularly attest that the most intense orgasms they've ever had were at their own hands. And in the face of the devastating AIDS epidemic confronting South Africa, masturbation and non-penetrative sex are being more openly advocated as healthy, normal and potentially life-saving.

The combination of Calvinist morality, tight-lipped African tradition and uptight Anglo-Saxon influences make talking openly about sex in South African society challenging at best. Introduce the topic of masturbation in polite conversation and the reaction is most often one of excruciating embarrassment. Yet, as people become more liberated about their sexuality, sexual discovery through masturbation often leads to more fulfilling sex lives with their partners. And in an age of HIV/AIDS, couples are more routinely finding that mutual masturbation is capable of giving intense sexual pleasure and satisfaction.

Normalising perceptions of masturbation as a healthy sexual option is part of the effort to change sexual attitudes, particularly among adolescents. Most teenage boys will have their first orgasm through masturbation. But they will regard masturbation as furtive because, as a child, there's no way you'll talk to anybody about this – let alone your parents. What teenage boy wants to be labelled a wanker, a loser, unable to score with girls?

Dispelling the myths about masturbation is essential for cultivating a more balanced perspective on sexual expression. South African teenagers are becoming sexually active at an increasingly younger age, and we have one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world. Adolescents are at greatest risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, so masturbation is the safest form of sexual pleasure for them, especially with oral sex being questioned as a possible route for infection. Your teenager should be aware there's evidence that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted through oral sex and that semen can be introduced into the vagina manually.

In the final analysis, as the old joke goes, don't knock masturbation, it's sex with someone you love. Or at least it should be if you're doing it right. It can play an important part in helping teenagers, and indeed adults, discover what turns them on and eventually to communicate those desires to a partner. It's natural, healthy sexual behaviour that will happen no matter what taboos we place on it. The difference is that, if we don't with word and deed imply to our children that their genitals are in some way dirty, our kids are much more likely to grow up feeling able to enjoy their sexuality, alone or with someone special.

To receive a copy of the booklet *Talking to Your Teenager*, write to loveLife at Box 45, Parklands 2121 or e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za). For more information about sexuality check out the website [www.lovelife.org.za](http://www.lovelife.org.za)

☎ (011) 327-7379 or fax (011) 327-6863.

talk about it

## Mating games

I once came up with what I thought was a splendidly original idea, and for a wedding anniversary booked a single night in a sea-facing room at a beachfront hotel. It was only six minutes from our house, but we weren't there to sightsee. I wanted us to feel like we were on a fling, not suspended between meet-the-teacher week and an inaugural trip to the orthodontist. We checked in, took a mind-clearing stroll on the beach and spent the next 17 hours in the room.

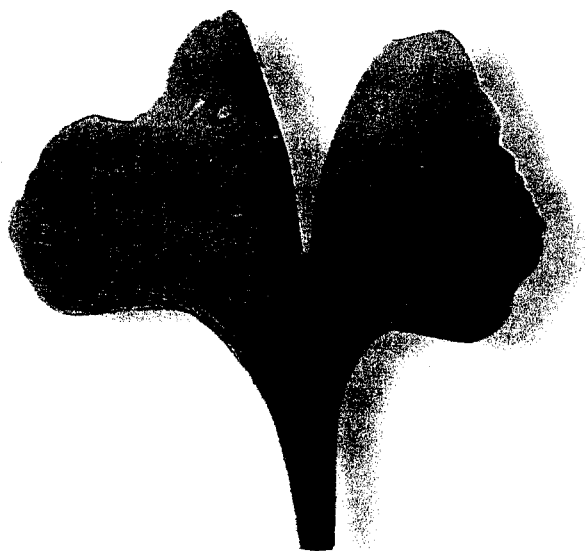
Yes, we tried out the deep bathtub with the Jacuzzi jets. We also read the newspaper, watched a tape of a movie we'd missed, had a quiet dinner and caught our collective breath. It was only when I told friends about our getaway that I learnt almost everyone I knew had already done it. The hotel staff must see us coming: 'There's this weekend's harried couple trying to rekindle the flame.' They ought to offer a special promotion.

This might seem rather contrived: passion by appointment is something of an oxymoron. We all have memories of spontaneous combustion (no, I won't share mine), and we're surrounded by movies and TV shows and advertisements that tell us the best love is the unexpected kind, whether it's a chance encounter with a stranger or the engagement ring hidden in your dessert soufflé. The implication, of course, is that by the time you have amassed a few offspring you're not supposed to care any more. Or if you do, you're destined to end up the way we did in the hotel room in Florence. So you might as well give it up.

Don't. Maybe you've read Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* with your kid. What if, like James, we faced adversity by looking at things in a different way? Maybe our kids aren't there to prevent us from acting like partners. Maybe they're there to remind us that's what we are – and the way we act with each other is as much a part of bringing up kids as getting them to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Where else will they get their ideas about love and romance?

The only issue is logistics. And, if you look hard enough, opportunities will appear in the strangest places. We went to sleep that night in Florence defeated, then spent the next day strolling the city. After dinner we headed back to the hotel by way of the Piazza Signoria, a big, bustling square. Walking down one of the small, dark arteries that lead on to the square, we heard music. When we got there, the whole square was lit. On a big temporary stage, two dancers were performing while the local orchestra played George and Ira Gershwin, of all things. *The Man I Love* poured out of loudspeakers, filling up the night.

Now, one of the things Larry and I have in common is a love of music that was written before we were born. *The Man I Love* may have been written in 1924, but between us we know every word, and we're not embarrassed to sing it in public. We stopped so Sarah could listen – and then continued on our way, our arms around each other, singing Gershwin as our parents might have done, as we do because we are still in love. As Sarah may, to some lucky fellow, someday. ♦



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# love lines

## Sex in the city

Life in a big city may seem sleazier than that in the countryside. But the contrary image of sex in the city as somehow more glamorous is a television fantasy. Fact is, sex is sex wherever you may be. It is true, however, that wherever more people are crammed together, variations on sexual behaviour will be magnified. Every major city in South Africa has at least one red light area with strip joints and brothels. Commercial sex work has blossomed in South Africa as economic circumstances have driven more and more women to earn an income in this way.

Although still illegal, police now generally turn a blind eye and the commercial sex industry is flourishing in big inner cities, in small towns along trucking routes, at casinos, in hotels, in nightclubs – essentially, almost anywhere you can imagine. Who fuels this growth industry? Mainly upper-income, professional men.

Services provided by sex workers offer a range of choices, and even if your lover is faithful to you in the strict sense of not 'making love to another women' that does not necessarily mean he's not availing himself of professional sexual services.

Teenagers growing up in the big city are undoubtedly exposed to a more promiscuous environment than their rural counterparts. The sexual behaviour of youth in the city is influenced by the nightlife where attracting a sexual partner is the name of the game. Increasing teenage alcohol and drug abuse is part of the scene. But even children hanging out at the mall in some of the country's smartest suburbs are sometimes trawling for sex, and they may be as young as 12 or 13. This is enough to send any mother into a flat panic.

What can you do? Inform yourself. Don't be naïve about sex and sexual behaviour. For example, commercial sex work really is the oldest profession. Even the Victorians knew how to integrate the concept of a visit to the bordello with polite society. It may be time to examine your own attitudes and talk to your partner about it.

When it comes to children, it's never too early to open the door to questions they may have about sexual behaviour, the sex industry included. Ideally, you should have the type of relationship with your teens where they are comfortable talking to you about sex. You need to understand the pressures of being a teenager today so that you can help guide your child into making informed choices. Preaching from perspectives that may have been imposed on you by your parents simply perpetuates the many outdated myths we were all made to believe.

Wherever you live, sexual awareness, and particularly matters of sexual health, need to be high on the agenda – HIV/AIDS doesn't confine itself to either rural areas or to the fleshpots of the cities.

To receive a copy of the booklet *Talking to Your Teenager*, write to loveLife at Box 45, Parklands 2121 or e-mail [talk@loveLife.org.za](mailto:talk@loveLife.org.za). For more information about sexuality check out the website [www.loveLife.org.za](http://www.loveLife.org.za) or ☎ (011) 327-7379; fax (011) 327-6863.

**talk about it**

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# love lines

## Ways to say no

When sex is a choice made by two consenting adults, it's a give-and-take between equals that can be exciting, meaningful and fun. But if there's an imbalance between the two partners, sex can be an unpleasant experience for at least one of them. The high rape statistics in our country concerns every woman, and no one can afford to be blasé about rape. But there are other ways that women and men are coerced into sexual activity they don't want.

To be a man is to be a sexual predator, or so society often seems to suggest to teenage boys. To prove their manhood, they should be sexually active; in fact, sexually rapacious. Young men who might not be ready to embark on sexual adventures, or who'd prefer to experience sex within the context of a romantic connection, often find themselves bullied into acting in ways that impact negatively on them and on their partners.

For the girls caught up in this whirlwind of sexual posturing, their identity as individuals can easily be lost in their role as conquest, a notch in a sexual belt. The pressure put on them to be sexually active takes a variety of forms, from the threat of losing the boyfriend to more overt persuasion. Alcohol and drugs play a role in reducing young people's ability to think rationally about sexual acts in the highly charged surroundings of parties and clubs. This is not to say that teenagers are incapable of mature sexual relationships, but they're more likely to yield to pressures that older people may be better equipped to shrug off.

Adults in a committed relationship can also experience the imbalances that prevent sex from being the free exchange of pleasure it should be. Where one partner is economically dependent on another, the fear of being left destitute can make them feel obliged to provide sex for the other partner, regardless of their own state of mind, health or libido. The implicit threat of violence, even if not directly linked to the specific sexual act, can also make partners feel obliged to 'perform'. This can lead to sexual behaviour that is out of character for the individual – from group sex to prostitution.

The law is clear: nobody is obliged to have sex with anyone else, even if they're married to them. The problem is that in the heat of the moment, there's no policeman at hand to enforce the law. Sex is often entangled in a complex web of emotions, with love, fear, desire and even hate forming part of the equation. For each person, confidence in controlling their own sexual destiny is tied up with a sense of self-esteem. You have the right to say 'yes' or 'no' to sex with whomever you like – it's a beautiful thing.

If you're looking for information for yourself or to discuss with your children, contact loveLife at ☎ (011) 327-7379 or fax (011) 327-6863 or e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za). You could also check out the website [www.lovelife.org.za](http://www.lovelife.org.za) or write to loveLines, Box 45, Parklands, 2121.

**talk about it**



Blowing up a condom like a balloon is greeted by gales of laughter, but at least one learner looks a bit shocked.

country, meeting the rainbow nation, was with Evita's Ballot Bus – a borrowed Kombi that took him on a journey of more than 10 000 km on a free voter-education programme. Talking to children about HIV/AIDS, he says, is as important as telling people about democracy, their right to vote and their right to freedom and besides, this is his way of doing community service.

'Every six months or so I have this urge to renew my love affair with South Africa,' he says. 'There's so much going on here, so much to do. This year I made a decision not to tour overseas but to stay here and work. And what threatens us now more than anything else is AIDS.'

In one rural town, he recalls, the principal approached him after the presentation and said, 'Goodness, you said some things today that were difficult to listen to but at least now all we have to do to start the conversation is to say, "Remember when Oom Pieter said that word? Well, let's talk about that".'

As expected, not everyone's been this positive. The guidance teacher at one girls' school wrote to a local paper saying he'd been offended by the talk and that it contained 'vulgar, intimate sexual nuances about which they were previously ignorant'.

Pieter-Dirk's response was, 'I'm sorry, but when nine-year-old boys are sexually active and 10-year-old girls become mothers, who can wait with the survival kit of information?'

One wonders what this teacher would make of *S'camto*, e.tv's excellent sex education programme made for children, by children. Pieter-Dirk has watched *S'camto* and loves it.

'I can't believe what they talk about, the words they use. I sit there like an old man and go, "Whoaa, did that boy just say come?" This proves my point. If you're honest with young people and don't treat them like children, they'll be more open to listening and learning.'

When the largest group of people being infected in our country is young people aged between 15 and 20, one realises how urgently the problem needs to be tackled. And while *Sarafina 2* cost the taxpayer more than R14 million, Pieter-Dirk's tour costs nothing at all. And so, while government fiddles on the periphery of real life, NGOs, teachers, principals and people like Pieter-Dirk Uys are busy saving young lives in a young democracy. ♦

*Pieter-Dirk's planning to take his tour to schools in other areas and to make a video that'll be available to schools, free of charge. If you'd like him to give a talk to pupils, e-mail him at: [evitadarling@hotmail.com](mailto:evitadarling@hotmail.com).*

## For Facts Sake

Pieter-Dirk Uys has adapted his AIDS education schools' programme for the stage. *For Facts Sake* will run at Cape Town's Baxter Theatre in November for seven shows only. The show may soon go to other centres. Book at Computicket from October 31 to November 3.

# love lines

## The beginning and the end of life

'Dear Annabel,' the note said. 'I found these condoms in your jacket pocket when I hung it up. I just want you to know that I'm proud of you for being responsible, and if you ever want to talk about anything, I'm here.'

This mother of a 16-year-old may be unusual in her calm response to her daughter's sexual activity, and in fact it took a lot of self-control and thought before she made this measured response to the unexpected discovery. Chances are, her daughter won't take her up on the offer to talk, but the door is obviously open.

Unfortunately, this is not the norm. Most parents seldom talk to their kids about sex. Teenagers most often learn about sex from an older sibling or from friends. And sex education in schools remains, for the most part, inadequate. One result is that one out of three babies in South Africa is born to a teenage mother.

As devastating as a teenage pregnancy can be, the threat of HIV/AIDS has dramatically changed the environment in which our children are growing up and exploring their sexuality. Parents hate to acknowledge that sex is a major preoccupation for adolescents and that there is substantial evidence of increasingly early and widespread adolescent activity. If the number of South African teenagers infected with HIV continues to increase at the current rate, it's estimated that more than half of teenagers under 15 today will die of AIDS-related causes. If you're under 15, this means half your class will probably die of AIDS. So, as a parent, how does talking about it to your teenager help?

Effective HIV/AIDS prevention depends on safe sex practices – such as the use of condoms – becoming normal, everyday choices. In order to change traditional attitudes towards condoms and sex there has to be direct communication about the risks, and about how they can be reduced. There is substantial international experience to support the idea that more open communication about sex and early sex education have a fundamentally positive influence on adolescent sexual behaviour. It's no coincidence that countries such as the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have far lower rates of teenage pregnancy and report later onset of adolescent sexual activity than the United States or Britain – countries that have a much more conservative approach to sex.

Recognise that sex is a normal and natural part of your adolescent's life. The dangers are too great for you to hide behind your own sexual inhibitions. Reach out and talk to your child about sex. Teenagers need to understand the choices – to choose to have sex or to choose not to; to use condoms or not. But they also need to be able to talk to you about the deeper fears, passions and experiences of their growth into adults.

For information on how to talk to your teenager about sexuality, contraception and HIV/AIDS, call loveLife on their toll-free line ☎ 0800 12-1100 or e-mail [talk@lovelife.org.za](mailto:talk@lovelife.org.za).

You could also visit the website [www.lovelife.org.za](http://www.lovelife.org.za) or write to loveLines, Box 45, Parklands 2121.

**talk about it**

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# love lines

## Mother and child

One of the saddest aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is its effect on babies and children. Mothers who are HIV-positive can pass the virus on to their babies during the birth process or during breastfeeding. Studies have shown that up to one third of babies who test negative for HIV at birth can become HIV-positive after regular breastfeeding. Babies who have received anti-retroviral drug therapy at birth may still become infected if breastfed.

How this problem should be treated is one of the most debated issues relating to HIV/AIDS. At the time of writing, pregnant women can't freely get anti-retroviral drugs such as AZT and Nevirapine – which prevent the virus being transmitted from mother to child – from government clinics. The government has raised concerns about the safety of these drugs, and also about the expense of providing them, although an extensive testing process on Nevirapine is under way in Kwazulu-Natal. For women who can afford private medical care, these drugs do give some hope that the baby may escape infection.

There are also a number of schools of thought on breastfeeding. Some studies seem to show that babies who are purely breastfed have some protection against infection, while the group most at risk are babies who receive what is called mixed feeding: some breast and some bottle feeds.

Purely bottlefed babies are obviously not exposed to HIV from their mothers, but in areas where clean running water and heating facilities are not freely available, they may be at great risk of contracting gastric infections, one of the biggest killers of children in this country. In communities where clean water and facilities to sterilise bottles are available, bottlefeeding is probably the best, if more expensive, choice. In the long run, providing formula, sterile bottles and uncontaminated water is probably as important in helping to stem the tide of mother-to-child transmission as access to drug therapies.

The challenge that faces us is to use knowledge gained in the US and Europe to address our African problems, which have different causes and require a different approach. What will become of the babies who are orphaned by AIDS, whether HIV-positive or not, is something that will affect all of us in the future.

For now, prevention of HIV transmission through safer sex practices is still the most telling way that most of us can do our bit towards putting the brakes on the HIV/AIDS runaway train.

For information on how HIV/AIDS is transmitted and can be prevented, call loveLife on their toll-free line ☎ 0800 12-1100 or e-mail [talk@loveLife.org.za](mailto:talk@loveLife.org.za). You could also visit the website [www.loveLife.org.za](http://www.loveLife.org.za) or write to loveLines, Box 45, Parklands, 2121.

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to a similar illness, but it won't present unless there are sufficient environmental stresses. There isn't a single psychological illness that results in a child inheriting it, as a matter of course, from one of its parents.

### Which treatment do you use?

We use a combination of psychological, social and biological treatments. Psychological and social treatment involves working with the family and with the child, either on her own or in a group. We also collaborate with the child's school.

Biological treatment involves prescribing medication where this is appropriate. For ADD we use psychological stimulants such as Ritalin, and for anxiety and severe depression we use antidepressants.

### When is Ritalin effective?

If used in appropriate cases it can seem to work miracles, but the condition must be correctly diagnosed. In some cases a child may suffer from an anxiety disorder that looks like, but isn't, ADD, so Ritalin wouldn't be the correct treatment. Ritalin can only help certain aspects such as concentration and impulse control. Besides medication, an ADD child needs structure and remedial input to help with learning and self-esteem.

### What hope is there for children suffering from mental illness?

I'd say there's a lot of hope. If the diagnosis is correct and the illness is treated adequately, there's usually an improvement. We find that the condition doesn't go away completely, but there is steady recovery. Childhood treatment is usually long term, continuing for anything from a few weeks to some years. Depression can recur, however, so the child may be vulnerable to depression as an adult.

### How can parents spot a childhood mental illness?

If you recognise any of the above symptoms, look at whether your child's behaviour is interfering with her functioning or development. It's useful to talk to teachers about school performance. Evaluate whether the condition is causing significant distress to your child or your family. With some disorders, the parents and teachers feel the most distress. It's crucial that parents don't ignore their own distress; they should seek professional help too.

### How should parents approach teachers or friends about their child's mental illness?

Be matter of fact about it. Don't cover it up, as secrets breed rumours. Besides, you and your child need support. ♦

**Where to get help**

For more information on mental health issues, call 0800 12-1100 or visit the website [www.loveLife.org.za](http://www.loveLife.org.za). You could also visit the website [www.loveLife.org.za](http://www.loveLife.org.za) or write to loveLines, Box 45, Parklands, 2121.

**loveLife**

## APPENDIX 2

### EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF *FAIRLADY'S* 'BREAKING THE SILENCE' CAMPAIGN

This was extracted from a chapter excised from this thesis – using Smith's (2003) 'institutional ethnography' approach - dedicated to exploring the politics, procedures and principles implicated in the institutional machinery of text-production of *Lovelines*. This section uses interviews with text-producers, *in situ* observations, archival research, and content analysis to consider the formative impact and process of *Fairlady's* 'Breaking the silence' campaign that embedded *Lovelines* texts.

#### Looking for indicators of success (post facto)

Commercial media institutions are frequently represented as obsessed with making audiences statistically knowable (Stevenson, 1995). Such knowledges about audiences' demographic classifications, habits, interests and tastes - gathered in large-scale market research surveys (e.g. AMPS, 2000) – inform 'targeting' particular niches with textual strategies. Such textual strategies or the materials produced might be briefly reflected on by editorial staff, but their success or failure in reaching targeted audiences would seem to be dependent on (a) text-producers' 'intuition' and 'experience', (b) feedback from readers in the form of letters, and (c) audited sales of their commodities (e.g. ABC, 2000). There is little time in busy text-production agencies for 'research' on their own materials, e.g. historical representations of 'adolescence' in *Fairlady*; or how particular features, like *Lovelines*, are appropriated (and used) by audiences. Such critical research has become the domain of media and cultural studies departments in universities (Ang, 1991); or in this instance, psychology schools. My genealogical study was cut from this dissertation; and I develop a discursive version of audience reception research in Chapter 8.

When I asked *Fairlady* editorial staff how the 'Breaking the silence' project would be evaluated as successful, or the *Lovelines* series analyzed in terms of what worked or did not, someone jokingly responded that they thought that was what my doctorate was about. When I asked what kind of evaluation would be useful – I already knew the answer – Wendy, *Fairlady's* Assistant Editor, said 'hard indicators that Alice can take to the top [management]' (personal communication: observation notes). This section briefly notes three of these 'hard indicators' that emerged from interviews, a textual fragment from an editorial page, and a content analysis – conducted by myself – to estimate the *quantity* of HIV/Aids coverage in *Fairlady* 'before' and 'during' the 'Breaking the silence' project. This section represents a (guilty) accountability step, produced for an audience of *Fairlady* editorial staff, before I move on to consider 'softer indicators' and more critical inter-textual procedures in the manufacture of *Lovelines*.

## Media-hits

First, *loveLife's* small media hits. It is an open public health secret that *loveLife* is still in the process of developing a functional research division, and a long-term national evaluation plan based on surveys, focus groups and links to behavioural indicators (e.g. teenage pregnancy); and that they prefer to conduct their own evaluations of their campaigns – as a composite whole, rather than singly – and evaluation results are difficult to access in the public domain (Coulson, 2002; Parker 2003). Simon, a director at *loveLife*, admitted that few indicators for 'success' of the *Lovelines* series had been set up initially, and that it had been terminated 'precipitously'. Extract 7 sets out what 'hard indicators' he could establish under these circumstances. In this instance, Simon refers to small media (print supplements) that were advertised as additional sources in *Lovelines*, and which were orderable from the *loveLife* website address displayed as a footer in every *Lovelines* text:

Extract 7: 'The only measurable indicators were requests for *loveLife's* *Codi Loud & Clear* publication<sup>1</sup>. About 10 000 were distributed in a 12 month period [in 2000], but I can't say what proportion of this demand was specific to *Fairlady* readers.'  
[Simon]

## Other HIV/Aids activities

Second, *Fairlady's* fund-raising initiatives. As I have argued above with respect to the dis/appearance or relocation of key features – and the dissolved partnership with *loveLife* – very little or intermittent commentary was issued, editorially, on the 'Breaking the silence' project in *Fairlady*. Three editorials during 2000/2001, by Alice Bell – *From the editor* – deal exclusively with HIV/Aids, as follows:

- 12 April 2000: Introduces *loveLife*-partnership, and *Lovelines*. Already analyzed as Text 1 above.
- 7 June 2000: Presents a *Fairlady* 'Breaking the silence' update: introduces a new social issues column, *Briefing*, which focuses (in this issue) on the Government's National Aids Strategy; recounts a media visit to an Aids-orphanage in KwaZulu-Natal; announces a *Fairlady* fund-raising drive for a HIV/Aids project of readers' choice;
- 19 July 2000: Articulates a critical position on HIV/Aids as a socio-political issue, and mentions things that are 'not good enough', e.g. Government's Aids-denialist position, parliamentarians ignoring Patricia de Lille's challenge to take HIV tests, denials that Themba Khoza died of Aids, etc.

As a genealogical reader shut away in an archive, I examined annual sets of magazine issues with sustained attention, chronologically, and made careful notes on the emergence of events and development of ideas. Such scholarly examination constitutes a form of 'against the grain' reading (cf. Hall, 1980), since this is not how the regular *Fairlady* would be expected to read material (cf. Hermes, 1995). My systematic scrutiny of magazine issues as interesting historical documents or 'archival texts' also sits uneasily within the dynamics of magazine-production, which is deadline-driven, haphazard and focused on the current issue (see more on this below). However, from a pragmatic or functional perspective, *Fairlady*



editorial staff could take some pointers from 'project management' as a field of health systems research process evaluation, in updating and feeding back (for their audience) demarcated 'indicators' to monitor 'progress' and 'outcomes' of a project (Zwarenstein & Bachmann, 1997). For example, whatever happened to 'the fund-raising drive for a HIV project of readers' choice' (7 June 2000, p. 6)? This appears, and disappears without trace. As a genealogist, I was ecstatic within the history/present of a project that constantly dispersed, slipped, disappeared and re-emerged in other places or forms – as a rhizome. I happily grappled with discontinuities. Such (perverse) intellectual ecstasy would also constitute a form of 'against the grain' or 'sharp' (academic) reading.

One fund-raising initiative with a happy ending, which *was* represented by Alice Bell as an indicator of success, accompanied by photographic evidence, was as follows:

And to inspire you all: every little bit counts. *Fairlady* staffers raised money among themselves to buy an overhead projector for staff at eMnguzi Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal, after Sister Dudu Ntombela told *Fairlady* – during a field trip organized by *loveLife* – of the desperate need for such a projector to educate nursing staff. (From the editor, *Fairlady*, 19 July 2000, p. 9).

### A different *quality* of representations of HIV/Aids

Third, coverage of HIV/Aids in *Fairlady*. Two aims of the 'Breaking the silence' project directly targeted representations of HIV/Aids in the magazine; the first focused on the *quality* of material, and the second on *quantity* of coverage. With respect to quality of articles, Wendy, *Fairlady's* Assistant Editor, frames *Fairlady's* aims to highlight the HIV/Aids epidemic through publishing 'intelligent articles' and 'articles on people who are making a difference' [written interview response]. There was a perceived need to shift representations from 'victims' (as 'others'), who had unfortunately been infected with HIV; towards representations of women-like-me (as 'us'), who were doing something constructive in HIV-prevention, care or treatment, to resist stigma and discrimination towards the disease. Yvonne, the writer contracted by *loveLife* to write the *Lovelines* texts, construes this policy-shift at *Fairlady* in interview Extract 8 below, and reads this shift as influenced by (a) *loveLife's* 'up-to-date ideas' on coverage of issues related to HIV/Aids, and (b) the need for women magazines to 'position' themselves differently (in a competitive media market) through producing a particular (positive, hopeful, fresh) 'angle' on HIV/Aids:

Extract 8: 'I think that ['Breaking the silence'] is about a more general shift in the direction that Alice Bell is taking with the health focus. [...] About 2 months ago it was made clear to me that this policy is much less towards this victim private mentality, much less towards finding people who have got the disease, but more in terms of what [*Fairlady*] calls 'Me Help', which is something that I can do in my life. [...] Women's magazines, the whole role of them has changed, and there are so many more and we have to differentiate them all as well. It was also driven by *loveLife* who themselves have a very clear and very up to date idea of how this thing should be dealt with.' [Yvonne, writer of *Lovelines*]

What is implied in the *Fairlady* 'representational-shift' – if this is indeed what has happened in textual practice – is that text-producers believe they are 'in control of' representations of HIV/Aids, may 'step outside' conventional codes, and may 're-encode' them in creative ways to change the status quo. This text-production position also assumes that readers 'decode' material in the same creative spirit, and live their lives accordingly (cf. Morley, 1988).

My positioned argument in this dissertation deconstructs such disembedded intentionality, and casts representations into a deeper, stickier historical context of discursive practice. Thus, it seemed dubious/spurious (to me) to 'capture' the quality of this shifting representational territory, lacerated as it is by complex discourse practices of text-production and text-consumption, via a content analysis that counted up categories 'before' and 'after' a project/intervention (cf. 'hard indicators').

A systematic 2-year examination was undertaken of all HIV/Aids coverage in *Fairlady* from April 1999 to March 2000, the year *prior* to the 'Breaking the silence' project, and from April 2000 to March 2001, the year of the project's operation. This examination – summarized in data display matrices for 1999 and 2000. This included coverage of HIV/Aids in editorials, readers' letters, columns and feature articles. Very few qualitative shifts in representations were apparent; or, content analysis was defeated through representations of HIV/Aids that ruptured thematic categories with a capillary-network of inter-connections to other domains of living and being/becoming (subjects). The discursive *quality* of representations of HIV/Aids was covered in the (excised) genealogical chapter, where 15 years of HIV/Aids representations in *Fairlady* were considered (1987-2002).

### Increasing quantity of representations of HIV/Aids: content analysis

Regarding the *quantity* of HIV/Aids coverage – the 'Breaking the silence' project committed *Fairlady* to producing an article on HIV/Aids in every 2<sup>nd</sup> issue, to raise the *profile* of the disease for readers of the magazine – this was somewhat less painfully achieved through a strategic exercise in 'counting'. 'Traditional' content analysis is most commonly understood as 'a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication data' (Berelson, 1952, cited in Robson, 1993, p. 272). This protean technique has, however, been 'de-traditionalized' through meta-theoretical transformation within various qualitative *paradigms* as 'thematic analysis' (e.g. hermeneutic or ethnographic approaches); and through functional application within various practical *contexts* (e.g. media institutions). McQuail (1994) refers to content analysis as 'media book-keeping' – the stock-and-trade counting up categories of whatever institutions deem appropriate as evidence of outputs – often, ironically, requiring little/no analysis of the content of material itself. Such counting might include, for example, number of words, column inches or articles to broadly indicate foregrounding of a particular issue (relative to other issues); or frequencies of categories constituted as topics, headlines, genres, authors, sources, etc. (Van Dijk, 1988). Such conventionalized categories and counts are routinely used for comparative purposes.

After having produced the data display matrices – as an exercise in genealogical ordering or mapping - of HIV/Aids coverage in 52 issues of *Fairlady* between 1999 and 2001 (mentioned above), and found a huge complex flow of material in many directions, I was skeptical about (a) whether the amount of coverage of HIV/Aids (as outputs) had *increased*, and if so, (b) what *types* of coverage had increased. My approach was strategic and instrumental (and fairly wry) rather than taking on board the theoretical/methodological 'baggage' of content analysis; I saw this step as a tactic of capture to deepen a discursive reading of what was going on in terms of text-production, and not as a stand-alone statement of frequencies.

I followed feminist media critics' categorization of types/genres of features in women's magazines, viz. editorials, columns as short information pieces, longer articles, advice columns, readers' letters, etc. (e.g. Ferguson, 1983; Winship, 1987; Hermes, 1995; Simanski, 1998). If features mentioned HIV/Aids, they were simply counted as one of these types. The amount of coverage was roughly estimated on a page proportionate basis - 1000 words taken as a full page of *Fairlady* text – with tallies produced across types, and across two fiscal years. As a separate analysis of authorship, I counted the number of short columns and longer articles authored by *Fairlady* staff, by freelance health writers (local contracts or syndicated from elsewhere) and by authors positioned within specialist HIV/Aids prevention or research agencies. Numbers are presented in Table 1 below.

### Reading the numbers (and between the lines)

A superficial reading of these 'results' finds that there has been an increase in the profile of HIV/Aids in *Fairlady*, associated with the 'Breaking the silence' project – if this 'increased profile', or editorial significance accorded this topic, is indicated by (estimated) numbers of words devoted to it. Thus, the total number of words focusing on aspects of HIV/Aids in *Fairlady* in 1999 (*prior* to the project) was 37600 words; and this rose to 53600 words in 2000 (*during* the project). This constitutes an increase of 16000 words. Also, during 1999, 9 issues out of 26 for the whole year (or 35 percent) did not feature any coverage of HIV/Aids *at all*, and this had dropped to 3 issues out of 26 (or 12 percent) in 2000, given the operation of 'Breaking the silence'.

But a closer reading reveals a more complicated picture of the 'increased profile' of HIV/Aids in *Fairlady*: certain *types* of articles, produced by certain categories of *authors*, have increased. The most obvious is the huge increase in the number of 'columns' – shorter informational pieces (500 – 1000 words) – from nil in 1999, to 19 in 2000, which would include the 17 columns in the *Lovelines* series. This increase in columns alone accounts for 10000 words of the overall increase in the number of words by 16000 words in the year 2000. There is also a huge increase in the numbers or articles (features or columns) written by specialist HIV/Aids agencies or experts – that is, authority outsourced by *Fairlady* - from 3 articles written by such authors in 1999, to 22 in 2000. This would include the 17 *Lovelines* columns produced by *loveLife*. My argument is not that this outsourcing of deferred authority is 'bad practice' – indeed, it represents a trend in text-production of modern magazines (see below) - but that it masks the fact that there was hardly any discernible transformation in amount of HIV/Aids coverage in regular features produced by

salaried *Fairlady* staff. Thus, numbers of articles on HIV/Aids written by *Fairlady* staff [5 in 1999; 4 in 2000], editorials on HIV/Aids [1 in 1999; 3 in 2000], advice columns on HIV/Aids [2 in 1999; 1 in 2000], readers' letters dealing with HIV/Aids [5 in 1999; 6 in 2000] remained fairly static. Furthermore, the total number of longer length, in-depth feature articles (1500 – 4000 words) – by *any* author – increased by *one* article in 2000 [14 in 1999; 15 in 2000].

These 'results' might also be read in several ways that allude to the economic interests that inscribe media products in a market of media consumers (cf. Giddens, 1991). The social responsibility strategy adopted by *Fairlady* in April 2000 - incorporating the partnership of *loveLife*, which produced 17 *Lovelines* columns (500 words each) – increased the profile of HIV/Aids and bought political credibility. Donation of editorial space (to *loveLife*) also cut text-production costs, and retained editorial control over *loveLife's* copy in terms of 'style' for particular audience specifications. Such 'deals' are currency in modern media institutions, given the reliance on experts and professionals for personalized lifestyle advice, and the competitive edge that the positioning of such experts within a media product would accord that product among consumers (Rose, 1992).

But evaluation questions that follow from this brief examination might interrogate what happened in *Fairlady* after the 'Breaking the silence' project? Was the 'high profile' of HIV/Aids material maintained? Why wasn't the *following* fiscal year, 2001/2002, counted? Answers produce a complex picture of media institutional churning and uneasiness around audiences in the competitive market of women's magazines. Another economic reading is then directly related to anxiety about *Fairlady's* 'dwindling or flat circulation figures' [personal communication: observation notes]. This anxiety was a common topic of conversation among editorial and production staff during my periods of observation and archival work at *Fairlady* in 2000 and 2001. Thus, the year 2001/2002 was one of tumultuous changes at *Fairlady* at various levels: a new editor, assistant editor and feature editor were appointed; it was inscribed with a re-designed 'look' and re-positioned in terms of 'content' (e.g. more celebrities, fashion and home décor); and, finally – in December 2002 - it switched from fortnightly to monthly publication in an attempt to cut production costs while maintaining readership figures. This flux made it difficult to comparatively 'count' outputs in similar categories across years. At first glance, this flux appears to hollow out any notion of 'status quo'; it fabricates rupture and discontinuity. But as I showed in the [excised] genealogical chapter, discursive regulation of 'adolescence', parental communication and HIV/Aids had shifted little in 37 years of the *Fairlady* archive of magazine issues.

Content analysis of material in <i>Fairlady</i> relating to HIV/Aids: 1999 - 2000		
	April 1999 – March 2000	April 2000 – March 2001 'Breaking the silence'
Issues (out of 26) that don't mention HIV/Aids	9	3
<i>Editorials</i>	1 [750 words]	4 [2500 words]
<i>Feature articles</i>	14 [34 500 words]	15 [40 000 words]
<i>"Columns"</i>	-	19 [10 000 words]
<i>Elizabeth Duncan advice column</i>	2 [2000 words]	1 [750 words]
<i>Readers' letters</i>	5 [350 words]	6 [600 words]
Approximate number of words dealing with HIV/Aids	37 600	53 850
Features or columns written by <i>FL</i> journalists	5	4
Features or columns written by <i>freelance health journalists</i>	7	11
Features or columns written by <i>specialist HIV/Aids agencies or experts</i>	3	22
<i>Referrals out</i> to other sources of support or information	44	53

<sup>1</sup> This *loveLife* publication, *Codi Loud & Clear*, was not referred to in the *Lovelines* series; rather, it was the booklet *Parents & Teenagers: Talking & Listening Together*. I was unable to verify distribution numbers for either of these publications in 2000 or 2001.

## APPENDIX 3

### THE KAPB SURVEY INDUSTRY AROUND YOUTH RISK OF HIV/AIDS IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### Risky young bodies/psyches

Several literature reviews of, and writings about, South African Aids discourse have bemoaned the glut of descriptive, quantitative *KAPB* (Knowledge-Attitudes-Perceptions-Behaviour) and *KAP* (Knowledge-Attitudes-Practices) studies that demarcate youth, and other discrete niche audiences, as 'needs analyses' for particular kinds of intervention (e.g. Campbell & MacPhail, 2003a; Frizelle, 2005; Harrison, 2005; Kelly et al., 2001; MacPhail, 1998; Wilbraham, 2002). Kelly et al. (2001) explain that while these forms of cognitions – knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions – are blurry in the practice of situated thinking/action, the inter-relation between them as 'elements' or 'variables' is theorized by a North American behavioural science tradition that incorporates proliferating 'outcome-oriented' theories of behaviour change (p. 20-1) (cf. DiClemente et al., 2002; see Chapter 1).

The elements are causally connected, such as: *inaccurate* knowledge about HIV/Aids leads to *wrong* action (unprotected sex), and *accurate* knowledge leads to *right* action (condom use). This perpetuates a vicious cycle of mono-causal and effect fictions - viz. measure (baseline), intervene (to 'cause' change), measure (effect) - in complex social environments where influences/obstacles are multiply determined. I will return to this crucial 'social flaw' of intervening variables and compound effects in quasi-experimental (controlled trial) designs repeatedly in the chapters that follow, because it underpins the implied relationship between parental communication with children about sex (intervention), and the risk-safety of those children (effect), measured in terms of whether they become pregnant or HIV+, or not (behavioural indicators of unprotected sexual activity).

Although pilot research to establish KAPB/KAP questionnaires might originally have been qualitatively embedded in contextual/pragmatic understandings of situated risk, such studies now mass-produce positivistic statistical summaries based on respondents' recognition of right answers from forced choice formats (MacPhail, 1998); and contradictions – for example, good knowledge levels may indeed still be associated with risky behaviour - are greeted with calls for further KAPB/KAP surveys (Kelly et al., 2001). I will briefly review how a few aspects of young people's knowledge, perceptions and behaviour have been empirically mapped through such studies, before presenting overall commentaries and dissenting voices. I am deeply indebted to and inscribed by Kelly et al.'s (2001) review, commissioned by *Save the Children (UK)*, of more than 200 African studies on youth, HIV/Aids and mass communication, along KAP and other lines of force.

#### Knowledge

Most youth appear to have become incrementally better informed regarding HIV/Aids and risk-reduction principles through the 1990s (e.g. DuPlessis, Meyer-Weitz & Steyn, 1993;

Mathews, Everett, Binedell & Steinberg, 1990; MacPhail, 1998); although the 'grayer areas of risk' were inaccurately grasped (e.g. mother-to-child-transmission, breast-feeding, what 'abstinence' is: Kelly, 2000), and there were slippages between abstract information and technical skills and 'hands on' sexual experience (Varga, 1997, 2000). Thus, Harrison (2005) notes that many young people have poor knowledge of (their own, and others') reproductive biology/anatomy.

Most youth pick up information about sex, HIV/Aids and safer sex from media (radio and television), friends and older siblings (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002, 2003b). A compulsory, comprehensive life skills program (including HIV awareness) was developed by the State Departments of Health/Education in 1996 (see *National Education Policy Act*, 1996), and has been in the process of (patchily and hesitantly) being 'phased into' school curricula since 1998/1999 (see Crewe, 1997; Fox et al., 2002; Kelly & Parker, 2001b). Mathews et al. (1990) found discrepancies in youthful knowledge consistent with amounts of exposure to information, for example older adolescents in urban areas were better informed than younger adolescents in poor/rural communities, who were at this time deprived of parental instruction, media messaging or school-based life skills programs. Kelly et al. (2001) still mark young adolescents entering high school as HIV-risk prone for these reasons, and needful of specifically targeted, peer-lead (rather than parental) interventions to develop life skills and bolster new normative trends involving sexual knowledge and sex (cf. Campbell & MacPhail, 2003b).

### Beliefs and misperceptions

Misperceptions, misrepresentations and misinterpretations of 'real facts' of HIV/Aids are rendered empirically as forms of possibly culturally grounded, but inherent personally held *inaccurate* knowledge (LeClerc-Madlala, 2002b). This speaks to HIV/Aids risk-prevention as bio-medically prescriptive, rather than tolerant of culturally diverse health and illness beliefs (cf. relativistic ethno-medicine); and it seeks to re-inscribe mistaken meanings (or resistance) as/through preferred meanings (LeClerc-Madlala, 2002a; Frizelle, 2005). Empirical data tracked such misperceptions in two directions, related to (1) the dubious (and exotically Other) *content* of beliefs, and (2) the immature and irrational *thought processes* of adolescents. LeClerc-Madlala has explored the cultural functions of much media-publicized Zulu communalism in beliefs of 'infect one, infect all - don't die alone' (LeClerc-Madlala, 1997), and 'virgin cleansing' (having sex with a white virgin) as a cure for Aids (LeClerc-Madlala, 2002a). However, Kelly (2000) could find little consistent evidence among his six sentinel sites for so-called cultural/urban myths (e.g. AIDS stands for 'American Ideas to Discourage Sex', HIV injected into oranges, etc.). Furthermore, there is little indication of how seriously such representations, if locally present, are ascribed to or acted on (Kelly et al., 2001; Harrison, 2005); or how contradictory, medicalized information on HIV/Aids – for example, from mass media campaigns, clinics or schools – collides or reconciles with, or displaces, such 'traditional' beliefs (Harrison, Xaba & Kunene, 2001; Ntlabati, Kelly & Mankayi, 2001).

Most South African researchers have found young people – following international trends – to (a) under-estimate their risk exposure, and to (b) exclude their risky behaviour, such as

opportunistic unprotected sex, from established risk categories (Eaton, Flisher & Aaro, 2003; Flisher, 1996; Kelly, 2000; Kelly & Parker, 2001a, 2001b; Reddy et al., 2003; Simbayi et al., 2004; Varga, 1997). This is widely (implicitly) understood in terms of the western cognitive-developmental psy-complex, to be due to (immature) egocentric thinking, before (inexorably rational) formal operational thought holds sway in all life situations outside the school science laboratory.

Cognitive limitations are said to include, for example, a trial-and-error mentality – inability to (hypothetically) anticipate consequences of actions without concretized/physical experience (e.g. Arnett, 2004; Berk, 2005), which implies that impulsive action may lead to thinking afterwards, rather than thinking guiding reflective/reasonable action. Neo-Piagetian David Elkind (1985) conceives the egocentrism of early adolescents (in America) – within its two related aspects of ‘imaginary audience’ and ‘personal fable’ – as thinking that is preoccupied with themselves and about how others might think about them (perspective-taking). Such self-consciousness is widely taken to underpin both conformity to normative peer pressure (e.g. mimic peers to avoid scrutiny and ridicule), and the unshakeable belief in the uniqueness of ‘the self’ and personal experience (e.g. knowledge of risks, but ‘it will not happen to me’).

Paruk et al. (in press) use a psychodynamic application of social representations theory (cf. Joffe, 1998) to understand such ‘risk exclusion’ – that is defense mechanisms of splitting and projection of HIV/Aids risk onto other virulent groups (such as ‘whites’) was a common coping strategy for anxiety, confusion and disempowerment in a semi-rural Zulu community. Thus, HIV/Aids in South African studies is found to be projected onto unfamiliar others (outsiders to their community/network) or stereotypical ‘risk groups’ (Africans, sex-workers, truck drivers, ‘promiscuous people’); and, implicitly using partner-selection as a risk-exclusion technique, unprotected sex within their own relationships is construed as ‘safe’ (Joffe, 1998, 1999; Kelly, 2000; LeClerc-Madlala, 2002a, 2002b).

### Sexual behaviour

All of the above leads to (voyeuristic and) governmental concern with documenting the sexual practices of young people – surmised from antenatal data and self-report surveys – including age of ‘sex debut’ (first penetrative sexual intercourse, sexual initiation, or ‘penarche’), sexual consent or coercion, frequency of sex, number of partners, condom use, abstinence, alternative sex behaviours, etc. (see Kelly et al., 2001, p. 26-31, for full review). Such documentation is routinely deployed in HIV-prevention interventions to delay, harness, and (safely) regulate sexual practices of risky young people (see later analysis chapters). I briefly cite selected findings on age of sexual initiation in South African contexts, coercion of girls and arguments about condom use – as these pertain to later discussion of *loveLife* campaigning directed at parents, and various criticisms of this.

With regards to age of sexual initiation, Kelly et al. (2001) note the huge variation across South African classed/aculturated and rural/urban contexts, and gender; with national median ages (in self-report studies) at 15-16 years for boys, and 16-17 years for girls (p. 27). The median age of sexual initiation, 15-17 years, confers with statistics from other



developing and even some developed contexts (cf. Harrison, 2005; Hartell, 2005). However, in poor/rural communities in South Africa, it is not uncommon for up to 25% of youth to have had sex at least once by 12-13 years old (Kelly, 2000); with more isolated (and much media-publicized) reports of (unspecified) 'sex' at 9-10 years old (LeClerc-Madlala, 2002b; Campbell & MacPhail, 2003a). Such studies implicitly skirt sexual abuse and rape of children by older adolescents or adults (Dorrington & Johnson, 2002), but clearly identify age-gaps between sexual partners as a risk factor, particularly in the differentials of power related to transactional sex between younger girls and older boys/men (Kelly, 2000; Parker, 2004). Thus, younger ages of sexual initiation are associated with higher/longer sexual risk patterns due to lack of knowledge/power, unprotected sex and poor negotiation skills (Harrison, 2005).

In qualitatively accounting for the first and subsequent sexual experiences in a deep rural area, Ntlabati, Kelly and Mankayi (2001) found that Xhosa participants (1) perceived the age of first-time sex to have decreased rapidly in living memory, as a result of conditions of 'modernization' (and concomitant erosion of cultural regulatory systems); (2) were unclear about what 'sex' meant as forms of penetration and 'thigh sex' were ritually involved in childhood games; and (3) evoked high degrees of freedom, space and leisure with regard to pursuit of sexualized activities – that is, a lack of parental/custodial communication about or monitoring of them. Regularly sexually active women in this study (4) resorted at some point to hormonal contraceptives (injections available at public clinics) rather than having to first acquire a supply of condoms and then negotiate their use (as a contraceptive *and* HIV-barrier method) within hegemonic acculturated norms of unprotected sex (cf. Zulu women in rural areas: Harrison, Xaba & Kunene, 2001).

Copious Southern African evidence re-inscribes this 'non-dialogical' approach to sex or the risks/consequences associated with it (see reviews: Hartell, 2005; Kelly et al., 2001; Eaton et al., 2003). Kelly (2000) found that 30-40% of girls in his six sentinel sites reported their first sex experiences as forced, coerced and/or taken-for-granted by (older male) partners. While this might confer with international trends (e.g. Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott & Thomson, 1994), the higher risks of HIV-infection, racialized poverty, violent assault and rape for women in South African contexts do not (Dorrington & Johnson, 2002). Thus, girls 'consented' to unprotected sex to keep partners, to prove fertility and/or commitment, to avoid violence or rape, or as a transaction to receive money, school fees, food or luxuries in exchange (e.g. Campbell & MacPhail, 2003a; Jewkes, Vundule & Maforah, 2001; LeClerc-Madlala, 2002b; *LoveLife*, 2000a, 2001; MacPhail, 1998; Strebel, 1992, 1995; Varga & Makubalo, 1996; Wood & Jewkes, 1997; Wood, Maforah & Jewkes, 1998).

However, the ongoing work of one South African health development organization in particular – *CADRE, Centre for Aids Development Research and Evaluation* – has, through careful meta-analysis of State statistics and other surveys, and their own research/interventions, sought to moderate the hegemonic representation of youthful sex practices as unilaterally promiscuous, out of control and unresponsive to HIV-prevention campaigning. Thus, Kelly et al.'s (2001) review concludes that although approximately 50% of young people under 16 years have had some kind of penetrative sexualized

experience (p. 29), this is not necessarily the dismal or hopeless 'crisis' of blanket-risk that is routinely figured, viz.

- Sexual activity is generally 'irregular' and 'opportunistic'; it gradually increases with age and partnership; and is dependent on socio-economic status in that poorer youth are more sexually active (without condoms) from earlier ages (p. 29);
- There are increasing levels of abstinence or 'secondary abstinence' (periods of abstinence after having been sexually initiated/active) as a reasoned response to cultures of HIV-risk and non-negotiation; but young people report avoiding sex for a variety of other reasons (e.g. independence, religious beliefs about pre-marital sex, abstinent norms among peer-groups, strict parents, prioritization of education, culturally sanctioned 'virginity tests', waiting for a special partner, etc.)(p. 30-1); and
- Condom acquisition and regular condom use among young people varies dramatically according to context – linked to accessibility of condoms, socio-economic status and normative cultures of sex – with 20-30% use reported in rural/poor sites, and 70-80% in some urban sites (p. 30). Kelly (2000) found the highest levels of routine condom use reported by sexually active learners attending an exclusive private high school, where strict no-condom-no-sex norms appeared to hold for both genders (presumably to avoid parental censure if expensive private medical treatment, litigation or derailment of privileged education ensued). Such findings are in direct opposition to citation, in earlier *loveLife* materials and evaluations by survey, of a 'frightening' and 'fairly stable' national/blanket statistic of 10% condom-uptake among sexually active youth (e.g. *loveLife*, 2000a, 2001; Stadler, 2001; Stadler & Hlongwa, 2002).

## APPENDIX 4

GENEALOGICAL WORK IN *FAIRLADY* ARCHIVE

Serialized puberty in <i>Fairlady</i> Five series by experts, 1972-2000		
<i>FL</i> issues	Title of series, with list of topics in order	Author, with citation quoted from <i>Fairlady</i>
3 May 1972 17 May 1972	<b>SEX AND THE ADOLESCENT</b>  1. The awakening of sexual feelings 2. The search for a partner	Dr Philip Cauthery & Dr Martin Cole: "Two experts have written a down-to-earth book about sex – <i>The Fundamentals of Sex</i> – particularly as it affects adolescents."
20 June 1979 4 July 1979 18 July 1979 1 Aug 1979 15 Aug 1979 29 Aug 1979 12 Sep 1979  26 Sep 1979	<b>SEX AND SELF KNOWLEDGE</b>  1. Physical maturity 2. Anatomy and arousal 3. Dating and attraction 4. Intercourse and contraception 5. Venereal disease 6. Masturbation and petting 7. Normal & abnormal sexual activities 8. Talking about sex in the family	Dr Eleanor Hamilton: "A sensitive series on love and sex for teenagers by the distinguished counselor and sex educator. This series is adapted from the book <i>Sex, with love</i> , by Eleanor Hamilton (1978: Beacon Press: Boston)."
15 May 1985 29 May 1985 12 June 1985  26 June 1985 10 July 1985  24 July 1985 7 Aug 1985 21 Aug 1985 4 Sep 1985 18 Sep 1985	<b>BODYTALK FOR TEENAGERS</b>  1. Sexual game-playing and flirting 2. Girls' bodies at puberty 3. Your first gynecological examination 4. When a boy becomes a man 5. What you should know about breasts 6. The real meaning of intimacy 7. Women's body hair 8. Keeping your private life private 9. Sexual diseases 10. Rate your pregnancy risk	Kathy McCoy: "Our special new series on healthy sexuality for teenagers is by award-winning writer, Kathy McCoy, of <i>The teenage body book: A guide to dating</i> (1984, Wallaby Books)."

Appendix 4: Series on puberty and sex in *Fairlady*

<p>2 Oct 1985 16 Oct 1985 30 Oct 1985 13 Nov 1985  27 Nov 1985 11 Dec 1985 24 Dec 1985 8 Jan 1986 22 Jan 1986 5 Feb 1986 19 Feb 1986 5 Mar 1986 19 Mar 1986 2 Apr 1986</p>	<p>11. Sexual fantasies 12. Masturbation: normal or not? 13. The new chastity: sexual restraint 14. How parents' sexual values affect you 15. My body isn't me 16. Birth control 17. Being homosexual 18. Chlamydia: the silent epidemic 19. A positive attitude to sex 20. Help! I think I'm pregnant 21. The mystery of sexual attraction 22. Incest: it's never your fault 23. Test your sexual IQ 24. Myths about love</p>	
<p>22 Jun 1988 6 Jul 1988 20 Jul 1988  3 Aug 1988</p>	<p><b>MIRIAM STOPPARD'S LIFEGUIDE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teen years, between years</li> <li>2. Living at home: the battleground</li> <li>3. Family crises: when things go wrong</li> <li>4. Boyfriends: infatuation and intimacy</li> </ol>	<p><b>Dr Miriam Stoppard:</b> "World famous author of the book <i>Evergirl's Lifeguide</i>, television personality and doctor, Miriam Stoppard's guide for teenage girls covers everything you need to know to grow up into a confident woman."</p>
<p>12 Apr 2000 26 Apr 2000 10 May 2000 24 May 2000 7 June 2000 21 June 2000 7 July 2000 19 July 2000 2 Aug 2000 16 Aug 2000 30 Aug 2000 13 Sep 2000  27 Sep 2000 11 Oct 2000 25 Oct 2000 8 Nov 2000 22 Nov 2000</p>	<p><b>LOVELINES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Let's talk about sex</li> <li>2. Sexual responsibility</li> <li>3. Free to choose</li> <li>4. From the horse's mouth</li> <li>5. In love again...</li> <li>6. In love again...</li> <li>7. Straight talk</li> <li>8. Safe sex and symptoms</li> <li>9. Making a choice</li> <li>10. When puberty comes early</li> <li>11. How Aid affects our future</li> <li>12. Who tells the truth about sexuality?</li> <li>13. Self-love [masturbation]</li> <li>14. Sex in the city</li> <li>15. Ways to say no</li> <li>16. The beginning and end of life</li> <li>17. Mother and child</li> </ol>	<p><b>LoveLife:</b> "[W]e've joined <i>loveLife</i> in a fortnightly focus on adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviour. The <i>loveLife</i> initiative is the biggest project of its kind ever launched in SA. Carefully thought out and developed, it's targeted primarily at young South Africans and at parents whose children are approaching adolescence... <i>loveLife</i> breaks the mould of traditional HIV campaigns by harnessing popular culture and the techniques of commercial advertising to promote a new lifestyle for young South Africans..." (From the editor, <i>Fairlady</i>, 12 April 2000, p. 9).</p>